



# ABYSSINIA

BY

HERBERT VIVIAN











ABYSSINIA

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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# ABYSSINIA

Through the Lion-Land

To the Court of the Lion of Judah



BY

HERBERT VIVIAN M.A

AUTHOR OF "TUNISIA AND THE MODERN BARBARY PIRATES,"  
"SERVIA : THE POOR MAN'S PARADISE," &c

WITH 80 ILLUSTRATIONS AND TWO MAPS

London

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Henrietta Street

1901





To  
MY LADY

I DEDICATE THIS RECORD OF A JOURNEY  
WHEREOF THE GREATEST HARDSHIP  
WAS HER ABSENCE



“’Tis a very excellent piece of work, madam lady;  
would ’twere done.”





## Preface

THE Queen of Sheba made a long journey to visit Solomon, wisest of kings. To-day whoso is wise will wish to explore the land of her descendant, Menelik, King of the Kings of Ethiopia, Conquering Lion of Judah.

Tourists have exhausted the interest of modern lands; they have penetrated the fringe of countries, like Turkey and Morocco, where the Middle Ages still survive; but it has not yet occurred to them to go a step further back, and observe for themselves how men lived and thought forty centuries ago. We delight in roaming amid the ruins of Pompeii because we fancy that every stone has a hidden story of the glorious days of Rome, that we are brought somehow face to face with the old world and may breathe its atmosphere, realising the small details of everyday life as no book can ever suggest them. Yet must we come away with a dull sense of incompleteness. Though stones may speak, they need interpreters as a fossil bone needs a scientist to reconstruct a mammoth. How differently would Pompeii convince us if it had been preserved with all the ancient buildings unimpaired and the populace

still pursuing their daily avocations. That is the way in which Ethiopia brings home to us the daily life of Bible kings and patriarchs. We are not left to grope among ruins, but we rub shoulders every hour with men and women whose manners and thoughts, cares and pleasures have remained practically unaltered by the lapse of time.

Consider how near to us this strange survival of the old world remains. A luxurious steamer takes us in a few days to the busy port of Aden, home of hospitality; we cross quickly into Africa, we hire camels for our baggage, we bestride our mules, and in a few hours we are wandering among pastoral tribes and approaching the lair of lion or hippopotamus.

The religion of Abyssinia is probably the most ancient form of Christianity extant, and I am willing to wager that a description of her ceremonies may appeal even to the most humdrum Protestant amongst us. He may scoff at the dances of priests, who wave their long wands in dreamy cadence, or at the strange stuffed birds which hang suspended from the roofs of churches, but he cannot refuse a tribute to the antiquity of a ritual which reflects the days of King David and the Prophets.

Apart from their history and origin, the Abyssinians afford a fascinating study as the only African people who may one day defy and even rival European civilisation. Nobody knows and everybody wants to know what the attitude of Abyssinia is likely to be towards ourselves and our rivals. I hope to be able to throw some light upon this point, for I have talked

with all sorts and conditions of people in Abyssinia, from the Emperor Menelik II., who gave me an audience of forty minutes, down to members of what might be called the Young Abyssinia Party, who wish to introduce all the barbarism of civilisation into a land which has remained unspoiled since the days of the Queen of Sheba, mother of Menelik I.

Yet, let the critical make no mistake. I do not claim to have written an exhaustive monograph of Abyssinia, as I once did of Servia. I offer mere impressions. I shall be satisfied if I succeed in conveying those impressions to the public.

At the same time I venture to anticipate a certain interest for the narrative of an expedition by caravan, undertaken by one whose adventures had hitherto been bounded by cities and railways. Any one who goes at all far afield usually tries to make out that his difficulties have been enormous. This is partly due, no doubt, to the desire to be considered bold and brave—a form of vanity from which even the most timid are rarely free. It may also be ascribed to a fear lest the exploit should become hackneyed and the credit of exploring be diminished thereby. After reading all sorts of books on African travel, I imagined that all sorts of hardships, miseries, and dangers would confront me. It was therefore a pleasant surprise to find no poisonous snakes in my bed, no scorpions in my boots, no hordes of wild men lying in ambush for me by the way, and no ferocious beasts prowling into my tent during the small hours. Indeed, beyond such minor discomforts as rain and flies, from which



after all we are not quite free in this country, I had small cause for complaint.

Nay, further, I can safely recommend this kind of journey as the best tonic imaginable. I soon found I could do all sorts of things which I should never have dreamed to be possible at home, such as riding all night or snatching an hour's sleep by the roadside with a tuft of grass for my pillow in a flood of rain. By proving how easy the thing is, I shall be affording a number of people a very welcome opportunity of doing something new and strange, which they never thought of doing before. I claim to show that anybody who possesses average health and strength—a lady almost as easily as a man—can go through the big game country and visit strange African peoples without much greater danger or discomfort than would be involved in cycling from London to Brighton.

This is good news, for which I venture to anticipate a small guerdon of gratitude.

H. V.

*January 15, 1900.*

[My cordial thanks are due to Colonel Frith, Captain Harrington, Mr. Harold, Colonel Sadler, and Mr. Gerolimato for all the kindness they showered upon me at Aden, Addis Ababa, Zaila, Berbera and Harrar respectively; to Captain Harrington and Captain Powell-Cotton for the loan of their beautiful photographs; also to Mr. Pearson for entrusting me, on behalf of his newspaper, with a mission to Ethiopia.]



# ERRATUM.

January 15, 1900, at the end of the Preface, should have been January 15, 1901.



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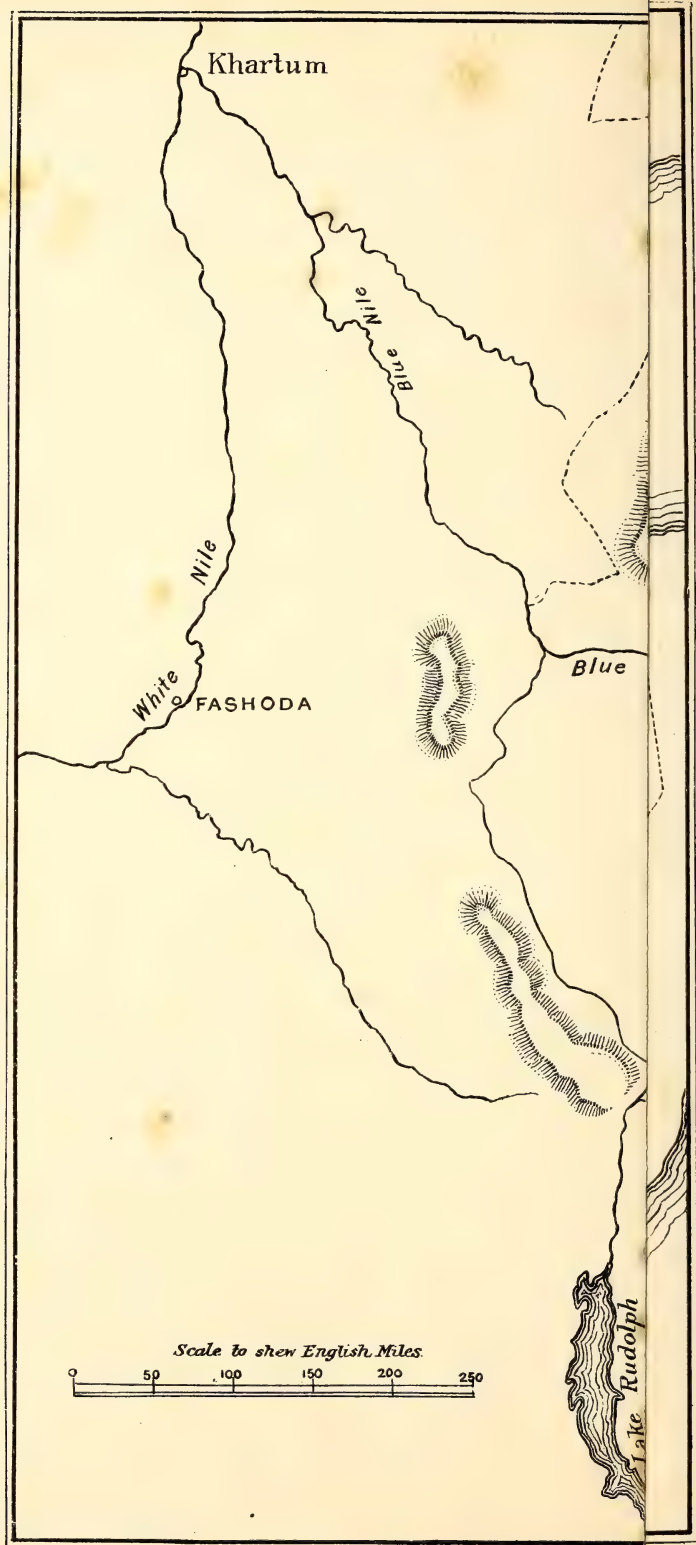




ABYSSINIA &  
SOMALI LAND







Khartum

Blue Nile

Nile

White Nile

FASHODA

Blue

Scale to shew English Miles.

0 50 100 150 200 250

Lake Rudolf

## Historical Introduction

Origin—Foundation of Aksum—Conversion to Christianity—A Hebrew Dynasty—Prester John—Portuguese Jesuits—Theodore—The Napier Expedition—Italian Aspirations—Menelik—The Empress Taitu—Italian Intervention—The Treaty of Uchali—Victorious Abyssinia.

VERY little is known about the history and origin of Abyssinia, which has always been regarded more or less as a land of romance. The word Ethiopia, like Lybia, has been used by classical authors to express the whole of Africa or, still more vaguely, all countries inhabited by black men. Homer, always inclined to be descriptive rather than precise, informs us that "the populations of Ethiopia, the most remote in the world, live some towards the rising and others towards the setting sun." The first definite information about the country comes from Aksum, which was founded in the days of the patriarch Abraham and served as residence for the Queen of Sheba. In 300 B.C. Ptolemy took it and set up obelisks, which remain there to this day. It became the centre of the ivory trade, and Pliny tells us that Roman merchants had dealings there.

The origin of Abyssinian Christianity, like that of everything else Abyssinian, is delightfully vague. According to one theory, a young Christian was

wrecked on the Abyssinian coast in the year 333 and promptly converted the country. Another version is that Abyssinia was not really converted until 600, when some monks came over from Egypt.

Abyssinia increased in prosperity and enterprise, conquering Yemen and being solicited by Justinian for an alliance against the Persians. Then the tide of Islam began to advance, and the Abyssinians went back perforce to their own side of the Red Sea. Nay further, there were driven in from Egypt many Jews, called Falasahs. These were of the old warlike stamp, and claimed to have settled in Africa during the reign of King Rehoboam. So strong were these Jews that they contrived to seize and keep the government of a great part of the north of the empire, and to set up a line of Hebrew kings, who remained undisturbed for nearly eight centuries, until the line became extinct in 1800, and the supremacy of the Negus of Shoa was acknowledged once more. Throughout the Middle Ages we may picture Abyssinia in a state of even more constant turmoil than that which has continued to the present day. Beside their own civil wars, they were constantly fighting with the various Muhammadan natives in the empire.

It was somewhere in the fifteenth century that Europe began to talk of the wonders of Abyssinia. Imaginative travellers related how the golden age had been established among her mountains under the rule of a priest-king, known as Prester John. There is no satisfactory evidence that such a person ever existed, but the Portuguese were sufficiently taken



by the story to send out missionaries in search of him. A certain Portuguese landed in 1490 after all sorts of odysseys and difficulties. He met with a good reception, but found to his disgust that there was a law in the land forbidding any stranger who once entered Abyssinia to go away again. By the year 1520, however, this law must have been modified, for King David of Ethiopia received another Portuguese mission, and sent it home with a request for help against the Moslems. Accordingly 400 Portuguese soldiers were despatched with a number of Jesuits, who attempted to induce the Abyssinian Church to accept the Roman Catholic religion. The attempt was a very pertinacious one, but by the year 1632 its failure was recognised, and the Jesuits were expelled from Abyssinia as they have been, alas, from so many other countries. In 1698 a French doctor cured the Emperor of leprosy, but it was not until the beginning of this century that Europeans began to renew their interest in the country. A craze had sprung up for discovering the sources of the Nile, just as another craze followed for reaching the North Pole.

We are now approaching the modern history of Abyssinia. In 1850 an Anglo-Abyssinian treaty was signed. In February, 1855, Theodore was crowned Emperor. Two British envoys were sent out, but they were killed in civil war, and in 1862 Captain Cameron came out as their successor. Theodore was now very friendly, and he despatched a letter to the Queen of England seeking an alliance. Through the

usual official mismanagement, this letter was used for a long time as a shuttlecock between the Foreign Office and the Government of India, falling finally into some pigeon-hole or waste-paper basket and remaining unanswered. Theodore, resenting the bad manners of leaving a Sovereign's letter unanswered, cast Captain Cameron into chains in 1863. Still the British Government remained supine, and it was only in August, 1864, that Mr. Rassam arrived at Massowa to plead for the release of our consul. But Theodore did not answer his application to come up until January, 1865. Presently he, too, was cast into chains. Still the British Government submitted tamely. Nothing was done for over two years. Then at last word came that Theodore was being worsted in civil war, and in April, 1867, he received an ultimatum bidding him release his prisoners within three months. Having seen that the British wrote much and did nothing during all this time, Theodore laughed at the threat, reflecting that if the worst came to the worst, we should have a great deal of difficulty in bringing up an army over the three hundred miles of rough ground which separated Magdala, his capital, from the coast.

However, 12,000 men were landed, and in January, 1868, Sir Robert Napier joined them as their general. His method seems to have been almost as simple and successful as that of our two most successful generals to-day. He reached Magdala on the 9th of April without having had to fire a shot. Then 6,000 Abyssinians swooped down upon 1,600 British. But our Snider

rifles gave us the advantage, and our losses were only 30 wounded, while theirs were 800 dead and 15 wounded. Then Theodore pleaded for peace, and liberated his captives. Sir Robert Napier insisted upon an unconditional surrender, and as the first British soldier entered Magdala Theodore shot himself in the mouth. The brilliant little war was over.

Theodore was succeeded by the Prince of Tigre, who was crowned in 1872 as "King of Kings and Conquering Lion of Judah," under the title of John II. On his death in 1889, Menelik, King of Shoa, succeeded with no great difficulty.

Before I proceed to give his biography, it may be interesting to sketch the origin of the Abyssinian war with Italy, for which his name will ever be held in remembrance. As early as 1850 the little kingdom of Sardinia was already beginning to make plans for the time when it should have absorbed all the other States in the Peninsula and put itself at the head of a new Italian kingdom. I have before me a correspondence between the Piedmontese Foreign Office and an old missionary, who was acting as Vicar Apostolic to the Gallas. The question raised was how to set about obtaining a foothold in Abyssinia. All the information was carefully noted, and a few years later we find Cavour going into details with a view to immediate action. In 1869, after Theodore's defeat by the British, the plans of the Italians were ripe for fulfilment. A harbour and an island were bought for less than £2,000 on the coast of the Red

Sea. Egypt and England protested, but Lord Salisbury was informed in 1879 that nothing political was intended, and when in 1881 the Italians began to set up a definite colonial administration, Mr. Gladstone was in office, which is as much as to say that we allowed an infraction of our rights to pass unnoticed. By a decree of the 5th of July, 1882, the Port of Assab and its territory received the name of an Italian colony. In 1885, still with the assent of Mr. Gladstone, the Italians went on to occupy Massowa, and the storms began to gather.

Born in 1842, a scion of the royal house of Shoa, claiming direct descent from Menelik I., the son of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, the present Emperor was a young man of five- or six-and-twenty at the time of the expedition against Magdala. It was natural that Theodore should wish to have this youth of royal lineage and prospective importance at his court, but the despot alternated in displaying marks of affection and suspicion. One day he thrust him into prison, another day he gave him his daughter as a wife. Indeed, it was only by his acceptance of the princess, for whom he never pretended any regard, that he obtained his liberty. Having obtained his liberty, he soon showed that he intended to keep it. On the death of this princess, he became enamoured of Taitu, the daughter of a nobleman of Tigre, and in 1887 he married her, thereby proving how strong a position he held already in the Empire, for her old enemy John was still upon the throne. After his death, Menelik was crowned Emperor on the 3rd of



November, 1889, and Taitu was crowned Empress of Ethiopia two days afterwards. Her influence over him has always remained very strong, and remains so even now that she has grown elderly and inordinately stout.

During the reign of John, Ras Alula was Viceroy of Tigre. He conquered the Dervishes who threatened Abyssinia from the north, harassed the encroaching Italians, and bade fair to put in a claim for the succession. When Menelik had succeeded in grasping the throne, he was naturally jealous of this man. So he summoned him to resign, and appointed Ras Mangasha, the son of the Emperor John, in his stead as Viceroy of Tigre. Civil war was the natural result; and that might be allowed to pass unnoticed, for the whole history of Abyssinia has practically been one long civil war, but this time the strife proved to be of unusual importance. The Italians seized the opportunity to interfere, and proceeded to back up Mangasha. This was the first time in the history of Ethiopia that an European power had interfered with the Abyssinians' privilege of slaying one another. Any one with half an eye could see that this was the first step in the inauguration of an active policy of intervention by Italy. It would be wearisome to go into details of the subtle attempt to turn an Italian colony into an Italian protectorate, with the undoubted intention of eventual annexation. It was chiefly through the support of Italy that Menelik was enabled to secure his succession to the throne, and in return for this



he consented to sign the famous Treaty of Uchali in May, 1889.

This treaty was apparently a mere agreement as to the frontier of the Italian coast colony, the permission for Abyssinians to supply themselves with arms, and various details of the future relationship of the two Governments. There was, however, a certain innocent-looking Article XVII., which eventually became a bone of contention, and, as the Italians had probably foreseen, brought about the recent war. The treaty was drawn up in Italian and Amharic. Article XVII. ran as follows in the Amharic: "His Majesty the King of the Kings of Ethiopia *may* make use of the Government of His Majesty the King of Italy in all matters whereon he may have to treat with other Powers or Governments."

In the Italian text the word "may" was replaced by the words "agrees to"—a very different thing, implying, in fact, the acceptance of a suzerainty. When Menelik discovered this trick, he lost no time in protesting. Count Antonelli was sent as a special envoy to discuss the matter, and the Emperor invited him to dinner for the purpose. All of a sudden the Empress Taitu broke in upon the discussion, and informed the Count with some vehemence that Abyssinia would never agree to the Italian interpretation. "We too," she exclaimed, "have our own dignity to safeguard; in communicating the Article to the Powers, you have implied that we are under your dependence, but that is not so. Ethiopia will never accept any protectorate." Count Antonelli

protested against this idea, and invited Her Majesty to make a proposal herself. She took up a piece of paper and wrote out the text of a new treaty. It ran as follows: "Article I.—Article XVII. of the Treaty of Uchali is abrogated. Article II.—His Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia engages himself to the Government of His Majesty the King of Italy never to cede his territory to any European Power, nor to conclude any treaty, nor to accept any protectorate." This broke off the negotiations, the Count went home, and Italy resolved on war.

The result of that war is too well known to need relation in detail. Italy was hopelessly defeated and has now renounced every pretension to a protectorate. Indeed she is quite grateful to be allowed to retain her poor little strip of territory on the coast. Menelik, now secure in the independence of his country, has set to work to consolidate his rule and put down every disturbance with an iron hand. In 1899 his lieutenant, Ras Makonnen, marched into Tigre and finally defeated Ras Mangasha, the last of the opponents of the present empire. And every friend of Ethiopia must hope that His Majesty may long be spared to enjoy the fruits of his courage and wisdom, and witness an era of greater prosperity than any which has gone before.

## Chapter I

### THE GARDEN OF ADEN

A Bad Name—Street Scenes—Hospitality—The Tanks—Water—  
Salt Works—Climate.

THERE was a sigh of relief among the Anglo-Indians on board the good ship *Caledonia* as we sighted the volcanic outlines of Aden. They had broken the back of their journey, and could afford to spare a breath of pity for the luckless wight whose business detained him, even for a few days or hours, on that accursed rock.

There was no pause in the chorus of execration. "When the Lord had used up all His materials," said one, "He made Aden." Another quoted the Irish private's remark: "If Aden was onything like what it is now, I don't wonder our first parents were onaisy." A third brought out the old sneer about a piece of tissue-paper alone separating Aden from the infernal regions. In fact, I was led to expect a sort of semi-penal settlement, not unlike Devil's Island, a natural gridiron with no water, no food, no amusements, no beauty, and the worst climate on earth.

From the moment when I stepped ashore, I was in raptures. Take Crater Camp at twilight: you have a background of purple rocks, presenting an extraordi-

nary, fantastic outline, mysterious beyond the dreams of romance. Up there, on the slopes of Shum-Shum, you may discern the Towers of Silence, where the Parsees expose their dead to the vultures. And in the foreground, as an exquisite contrast, are the brightly whitewashed houses of the native quarter glistening against the shadows. Closer still, you are in the mess of the West Kent Regiment, sipping long, cool drinks, and discussing the latest news from the Cape, while an excellent band just below you completes the illusion of more marvellous stage scenery than was ever put upon the stage. You drive back in the moonlight to your hotel at Steamer Point, through romantic gorges and astounding tunnels, beside a sea whose hues of heliotrope, moonstone, emerald, and lapis lazuli grow ever more exquisite and more varied.

And the street scenes! I could never tire of sitting on my verandah at the Grand Hotel de l'Univers, and watching the fascinating pantomime with the blue bay for its background. There is a jetty opposite, where relays of Somalis follow one another like turns at a music-hall. Twenty or thirty youths appear there in loincloths of sacking; each bears a goat-skin which he dips into the water. All then return to the promenade facing the semicircle of Parsee shops, known as Prince of Wales's Crescent. They form in two columns, and advance at a jog-trot, singing some barbaric song, whisking their goat-skins melodiously to right and left, jerking out water upon the thirsty road. They are the human water-carts of

Aden, and an hour or two later there is a sheen of salt crystals as the sole spoor of their passage. Next comes a long file of men, stalwart and robust, with bits of sacking for their only raiment, bearing aloft upon their shoulders each a square petroleum oil tin. They have been drawing upon an enormous barrel of fresh water, distilled from the sea, and are plodding their way to the hotel bath-room, where I shall presently plunge. Here is a cart, the miniature counterpart of Black Maria, drawn by a pair of humped oxen. There are coal-heavers of extraordinary blackness, ready to prove that though a lily may not be painted, a negro may yet be darkened. Yonder comes a party of Arabian Jews, recognisable not merely by their noses, but also by the strange little oily corkscrew curls worn just in front of their ears. A man with little grey toothpicks stuck through the end of his nose, and another with a tin on the top of his head, like the tile of an Orthodox pope; horses dyed a light gold colour all over, and white horses whose feet and necks have been stained deep orange; an ordinary gari (cab) turned into a conveyance for a harem by suspending a big shawl perpendicularly from the hood—there is no end to the shivering of the kaleidoscope. Verily I know few places to rival Aden for her colour, as well as for her local colour, and I protest against those scurvy natures which are always clamouring for green. Here at least they have not the excuse of the Arctic.

Perchance I shall tax the credulity of geographers when I assert that Aden is in India. But I felt that



I had reached India so soon as I stepped on to the P. and O. steamer at Marseilles. Still more Indian is Aden, whose Government officials, stamps, coins, even language, are those of Hindostan. Very Anglo-Indian, too, is the boundless, absolutely unrivalled hospitality of the place. I was scarcely ashore before I was invited to dinner, and made an honorary member of the club. Next day I was taken to a gymkhana—we should call it a garden-party if there were any gardens in the Garden of Aden. This was my preface to whole chapters of ceaseless gaiety. Luncheons, dinners, dances, regattas, picnics, paper-chases, receptions on board passing men-of-war, military tournaments, and water-parties were incessant. I was present one night at a delightful prize-fight, and after I left I heard that there were actually race-meetings. Each evening before dinner there was a general rendezvous at the club. In fact, I felt that I had been privileged to obtain admittance into a large and almost affectionate family. I met the same people every day, and the more I met them the better I liked them.

Nor need the common sightseer despair. His first visit, particularly if he have only a few hours while his boat takes coal, will be to the Tanks. Like most other amazing works, they are attributed to King Solomon and his Jinn. An inscription at the entrance announces that, "These tanks, regarding the original construction of which nothing is accurately known, were accidentally discovered by Lieutenant (now Sir Lambert) Playfair when Assistant

Resident at Aden in 1854. They were then completely hidden by rubbish, but were opened out and repaired by the British Government. The aggregate capacity of all these tanks exceeds twenty million imperial gallons." Further excavations might reveal further submerged marvels at Aden. What interested me most about the tanks was to hear of one which is situated in an almost inaccessible recess of the hills behind. It is frequented by great numbers of monkeys, foxes, and wild dogs, so fierce that they attack intruders unless these go in large parties and well armed. I asked an Arab attendant how all these animals found food up there on the barren rock. He replied at once, "The Lord Allah feeds them."

Water is, of course, an object of much tender solicitude at Aden, and these tanks, having been constructed so as to catch every available drop on the rare occasions when rain falls, are an enormous boon. It is difficult for us to realise the sensation aroused at Aden by the appearance of a shower. A friend of mine, waking up to find his adjutant by his bedside in a mackintosh, could only conclude that he had just returned from a fancy dress ball.

Another sight at Aden is that of the salt works. Perhaps the sea is the most valuable asset which Aden possesses. Water is distilled from it by laborious processes, and salt extracted for the enrichment of a company. The rarity of rain and the constancy of the sun make Aden an ideal place for the industry, particularly as there is nearly always

wind to assist the evaporation. The process is a simple one : you let sea-water into large shallow pans or lagoons, and leave it there until the refuse (iodine, magnesium, &c.) shall have sunk to the bottom. Then you open a sluice and turn it into another pan. Day after day you observe it growing more and more viscous, like a pond trying to freeze, until at last you can heap it into dazzling little conical piles. These ice crystals must be taken to mills and ground into a snow, which turns out to be excellent salt. I do not know of any industry at once so simple, so lucrative, and so fascinating. Each pan's output is made into a glistening mound, like a snow haystack, which may be espied for miles across the bay. The annual produce amounts to no less than sixty thousand tons.

The prime charge against Aden is the climate, and no doubt the heat is disturbing in August. I am told that sleep is then almost impossible, and that you lie all night on your roof gasping for air. But in the winter there is no cause for complaint. The thermometer rarely varies more than four degrees in the twenty-four hours, say, from  $78^{\circ}$  to  $82^{\circ}$ —a delightful temperature when you know exactly what to expect. Nowhere else have I experienced a more luxurious thirst or found greater pleasure in quenching it. It was at the club there that I first tasted a delicious beverage called "Baglehole," and when I made the acquaintance of Mr. Baglehole, the genial P. and O. agent, I could only conclude that he had been named after it. This admirable thirst is

peculiarly appropriate in such a metropolis of hospitality as Aden. It is impossible to go anywhere without being greeted with the merry invitation, "Have a drink?" One day, soon after my arrival, I went into a mess-room to ask my way to a friend's house. An officer listened to my inquiry, and then answered as a matter of course, "Have a drink?"

Perhaps throughout these lines I may seem to have repeated Aden, Aden, Aden somewhat too frequently; but for me it has a soothing melody which will always linger in my memory. Readily would I believe the legend that here is the site of the earthly paradise. Is not Abel's tomb there among the hills to dispel all doubt? And though volcanoes or other cataclysms may have changed the physical appearance of the spot, though trees and flowers and vegetables are precious rarities, it must always remain for me the true Garden of Aden.

## Chapter II

### WAYS AND MEANS

Ignorance about Abyssinia—Formalities at Aden—A Programme for Travellers—The Secret of Equipment—The Folly of Filters—The Key to an Abyssinian Heart—Physic and other Fetishes—Snakes and Snake Stories—Recruiting a Retinue—A Phantom Chambermaid—"Chits" and Cheats—An Ideal Butler—The Pilgrim—A *cordon noir*—"Tomboys"

EVERY one seems to take an instinctive interest in Abyssinia. I scarcely know why, unless it be from recollections of Dr. Johnson's delightful romance, or of that brilliant little war, when, as Disraeli puts it, we "planted the banner of S. George upon the mountains of Rasselas." It cannot be that my fellow-countrymen, so invariably absent-minded as to the most vital issues of foreign politics until they are suddenly confronted by a crisis, should have made an exception in favour of an empire which they scarcely distinguish from the realms of romance. Indeed I hardly know any land about which crasser ignorance prevails amongst us. I defy any schoolboy to tell me the name of Menelik's capital offhand. When I made up my mind to go there I had airy notions of beginning with a visit to the chief towns on the coast, and I learned with surprise that the Ethiopian seaboard is no more extensive than that of the Swiss Republic. I consulted a tourist



agency, but could not get beyond a list of sailings for the Italian port of Massowa, whereby I should have been launched upon a very fine wild-goose chase.

Even when I had discovered that my avenue lay through Aden and Somaliland, my difficulties had only begun. All the authorities at Aden were vastly polite, but they vowed with one consent that they knew no more about reaching Abyssinia than about reaching the moon. I asked the Resident for permission to cross Somaliland, but he could only regret that Somaliland was no longer under his jurisdiction. He gave me, however, a very delightful hint. "The other day," quoth he, "a man came to ask my leave to travel in Arabia. 'I am a person of no consequence,' he told me, 'and if I disappear no one will make a fuss or ask what has become of me.' 'Well,' I said, 'that's good enough for me. If you had come with sheaves of introductions, I should have had to be very wary before I let you go, but after what you have told me I shall do nothing to prevent your departure. In fact I don't want to hear any more of you or your plans, and I wish you a pleasant journey.'" "Ah! now I shall know what to say when I tackle the Somali coast authorities," I replied, and the Resident was hugely amused.

So I went on quietly with my preparations for departure, merely notifying Colonel Sadler, the British Consul-General at Berbera, that I desired to pass through Somaliland into Abyssinia. My equanimity, however, did not last very long. A day or so later

I met the Captain who is in charge of the District Staff Office, and he told me that he had on his wall printed rules, laying down stringent conditions as to the escort, equipment, &c., of all persons who wished to travel through Somaliland. He advised me to see the Assistant Political Resident if I did not wish to be stopped at the outset. That gentleman assured me that no one was permitted to enter Somaliland without an escort of at least fifteen rifles. I said I had heard so many conflicting reports that I thought my best plan would be to go over to Berbera and find out the real state of things. If the worst came to the worst, I could at least set off inland without saying anything to anybody and trust to chance to pull me through. I wound up by relating the story of a friend of mine, who desired to visit the interior of the Villayet of Tripoli. He asked leave of the Pasha again and again, but it was always refused. At last he sent out his camels and luggage with a caravan, and rode out to join them unmolested. This little anecdote was far from appeasing the qualms of the Assistant Political Resident, and he said he would not allow me even to cross over into Somaliland unless I gave him my word not to go inland without Colonel Sadler's permission.

"But surely," I pleaded, "if I go without leave, the authorities are not responsible for anything that may happen to me?"

"Do not deceive yourself. There is the question of prestige. If an Englishman were killed, we could not afford to let the natives go unpunished; otherwise

they would consider themselves at liberty to kill any other Englishman who might follow. If there is no danger at present in Somaliland, doubtless Colonel Sadler will let you go. Otherwise it is not fair for you to expect the country to undertake a troublesome punitive expedition for your amusement."

"Well, but what about these rifles? Can I buy them here or must I wait until I can get them from England?"

"You ought to have found out all this before you set out. As it is, you can ask the General if he will let you have them from the arsenal."

Back again to the General, who was as amiable as ever, but said he could only let me have the necessary rifles on my producing Colonel Sadler's permit to travel through Somaliland. Back to the Assistant Political Resident to ask if the rifles might follow me into Africa on my forwarding my permit. No; the rules and regulations were that I must be present to take them over myself from the arsenal. This opened the dismal prospect of several passages across a very nasty choppy sea in a cockleshell boat, where I was told the only accommodation would be on deck amid a crowd of unsavoury Somalis. All these excursions and alarums proved, however, to be utterly groundless. I was privileged to travel to Berbera and Zaila in the luxurious Royal Indian Marine Ship *Minto*. Colonel Sadler assured me at once that there was no difficulty whatever about granting me a permit, and that no escort was necessary, though, if I liked, I might take a couple of soldiers from Zaila to show

that I was travelling under the ægis of the British Government. I could not but wonder at the amazing ignorance which prevails at the only avenue for Abyssinia as to the ways and means of proceeding thither. I am not presuming to blame the Aden officials, for they have no longer any official concern with Somaliland. But if ever travel in North-Eastern Africa is to become popular it will be well to post up a clerk at least with some elementary information.

Meanwhile I would advise prospective pilgrims to stay at Aden, prepare there the details of their journey, and enjoy the many good gifts which that delightful station has to offer. Let them pay no heed to any advice or stipulation which may be advanced, but pursue their way with confidence and equanimity. They must go to Aden, if only to procure trusty servants, and thence to Zaila. If they proceeded to Massowa, the Italian coast town, they would not be permitted to proceed far inland, for Abyssinia is still jealous of Italy despite the late war, and though it might be possible to pass by way of Jibuti, the French colony, vexation and danger would be unavoidable. French spy-mania would be brought to bear at the port, and the consequences of French indiscretion in the interior would expose a traveller to attacks from the natives.

I was quite without experience in the matter of equipment for an African journey, and of course all manner of people volunteered all manner of advice, but it was so hopelessly conflicting that I wisely



determined to disregard the greater part of it and trust to that special providence which watches over drunkards, sailors, and other improvident persons. Looking back upon it all, I am stupefied by the success which attended me. If I were recommencing to-morrow I should make very little alteration in my outfit or stores, and compared with those of other travellers I hear about, my arrangements all went by clockwork. It was an exceedingly proud day when I met a party of old hardened explorers in the heart of Abyssinia and learned that they had not a tithe of my comfort though they spent ten times as much money. I flatter myself that I had everything I wanted as far as was possible without making my baggage unwieldy. When I reached Addis Ababa, the British Minister, Captain Harrington, told me he considered the secret of successful equipment was to take as few necessities and as many luxuries as possible. This, I found on reflection, was the principle I had instinctively adopted. It would be wearisome to go into too much detail here, but I may record triumphantly that I took neither tinned nor potted meats, no Liebig, no sardines, no ship's biscuit, no desiccated foods—in a word, none of the dreary morsels which figure most prominently in an outfitter's catalogue, whereas I was not wholly destitute of truffles, liqueurs, green peas, or foie gras.

Indeed, in some respects I could wish I had resisted conventional theories even more heroically. For instance, I was persuaded, against my better instincts, to take a filter. As I am not a water-



drinker, I argued that it would be as unnecessary as any item in the outfit of the hunters of the snark, with their mousetraps and beehives against improbable eventualities. However, everybody insisted, and I took the latest German patent. I tried it one day out of curiosity, standing it in a pail and sucking away industriously at a nauseous indiarubber tube for half an hour, with the result that I extracted half a wine-glassful of brackish liquid. On the other hand, all the experts protested that it would be ludicrous to take soda-water, and I weakly restricted myself to some six dozen—a concession I regretted bitterly before I was half-way out.

To cut a long story short, whiskey is an immense boon, on no account to be forgotten. Doubtless it is nasty to drink, but the Abyssinians love it, and the judicious gift of a glass or bottle convinces them of their duty when threats or blows or lavish proffers of dollars would be of no avail. I remember one muleteer in particular. He would make all sorts of difficulties about trifles, and grumble about the execution of nearly all my orders. At last I discovered a short cut for every knot. He would approach with his mouth full of complaints and a scowl on his brow. Directly I saw him coming, and before he had time to say a word, I would bid him wait a moment while I called to my butler for whiskey. A great grin would steal over the grumpy features, everybody all round would fall a-laughing, the clouds were dissipated, and I would be given my own way with a shrug. Unfortunately, however, as the days went on,

the rogue needed soothing in this way more and more frequently.

The question of physic is one to be confronted. Hundreds of miles from doctors and chemists, we are, as a matter of fact, probably far safer than at home, in the present condition of medical lore. But we have been brought up to buy a guinea's worth of advice every time a little finger aches, and early impressions are hard to shake off. Moreover, I argued that, just as you have only to take out an umbrella to ensure a brilliant day, so should a well-fitted medicine chest ward off disease. In fact I bought things chiefly as an amulet, after lengthy consultation with a doctor in England and another at Aden, who ran through the whole gamut of tropical disease for my benefit. They told me the latest theory was to attribute fever to mosquito bites,<sup>1</sup> so I took a net which cumbered my tent very inconveniently, and various essential oils which disgusted me far more than they did the mosquitoes.

They bade me, in case of snake-bite, gash the afflicted part with a knife and tie tight bandages to stop the circulation. But I know very well that I would far rather risk being poisoned than proceed to such violent measures. So I told them a story which I had from one of their own fraternity. A man came to him and exhibited a maimed hand,

<sup>1</sup> Oddly enough, when Burton travelled in Somaliland fifty years ago, he found this theory current among the natives, but dismissed it as a "superstition" attributable to "the fact that mosquitoes and fevers become formidable about the same time."

saying, "See, I was bitten by a snake in the finger, so I cut it off at once. Was I not right? Did this not save my life?" After obtaining a description of the snake the doctor said, "You certainly acted with great presence of mind," but commenting on the incident afterwards to his friends, he exclaimed, "I had not the heart to tell him the truth, for, as a matter of fact, the reptile was perfectly harmless." For my part, I believe I placed chief reliance upon a certain black stone from the amphitheatre of El-Jem, reputed by Muhammadans to be very potent against both serpents and scorpions. This I always kept in my pocket, and almost the only snake I saw fled at my approach. Snakes (or at least snake stories) are, however, very prevalent in Abyssinia. I met an Englishman at Tadechamalka who had found an exceptionally venomous one in his bed. And a Greek at Lagahardim assured me that boa constrictors were very voracious there, often swallowing men up while they slept. Indeed, so frequent was this catastrophe that it was the habit for people sleeping in the open air to keep their legs spread well apart so that a boa might be pulled off before it had gone too far.

Probably the most important preparation of any is that of selecting servants for the journey, and I attribute most of the smoothness of my progress to the good fortune—or shall I say wisdom?—of my choice. I had been told all sorts of foolish things about possible mutinies and probable desertions in the desert. But I believe the average Somali is perfectly trusty,

especially if he be well treated. His gratitude is easily aroused, he is cheerful even in adversity, and he is often plenteously endowed with common sense, as well as wit. The best, as well as the worst, are to be found at Aden, where contact with civilisation accentuates their natural points. I had ample opportunity of observing these points while preparing for my leap in the dark. I was scarcely installed in my hotel before the news spread like wildfire that an Englishman was recruiting for Abyssinia. From early morn till long past a dewless eve candidates would present themselves for my service.

To appreciate the scene it is necessary to realise the surroundings. I thought I had stayed at every possible variety of hotel, north and south and east and west and far and near, but the Grand Hotel de l'Univers at Aden was unlike any of them. No doubt it would strike an Anglo-Indian as supremely commonplace, but to me it was full of freshness and originality. Indeed, I took a long time to get over the illusion that the landlord and I were playing at being on board ship. My bedroom was a saloon, with doors opening on to a long deck or verandah on each side. In the morning I sought the shade on the east deck, in the afternoon on the west. The doors were always open, day and night, for at Aden, as in the Red Sea, everybody aims at living in a perpetual draught. The wind dries up your ink in an afternoon, and you must lay in a large stock of paperweights, for everything volatile is liable to be whisked off to sea at any moment.



It was impossible ever to be dull on these decks, if only for the society of the Somali chambermaid. She belonged to the lowest caste, which alone condescends to sweep floors and empty slops, but she evidently thought no small beer of herself. When the barber declined to take no for my answer, she would whack him over the head with her broom, and hustle him ignominiously away towards the companion—I mean the stairs. All day long this broom was in her hand, and she swept, swept, swept as if fulfilling some fiendish penance. So far as I could make out, she spent her time in sweeping great clouds of dust from north to south, and then back again from south to north. Sometimes she would kneel down, collect a handful of dust, and fling it as an oblation into the roadway, but the supply of clouds never seemed to be diminished. The presence of white men sipping coffee or “pegs” on lounge chairs was never allowed to interfere with this working out of her destiny. Like the whirlwind in Dante, “dusty to vanward, on she rode superb.” Neither yells nor entreaties on my part ever availed to persuade her that she must not sweep her choking cloud straight at me. She was always imperturbable. Her big luminous eyes wore no expression of any kind; her serious pouting lips never permitted themselves to smile. The witch seemed to take no interest in anything save her broomstick and her cloud. At last I chanced to discover a short way for putting her to flight. Her appearance always delighted me, with her coal-black skin and the original costume, which was limited to a



couple of coloured pocket-handkerchiefs, a massive silver necklace, a turban, and some monstrous silver earrings ; so of course I must try to photograph her. Hardly had I brought out my camera, when this usually silent creature emitted a shrill scream, and fled down the deck helter-skelter, scattering her broomstick and fresh clouds of dust as she went. Thenceforward I had but to make a movement towards the camera in order to protect myself effectively against her persecutions.

Scarcely had I crept on to the verandah in my pyjamas to discuss toast and coffee among the dust clouds, before stealthy figures would steal along the deck, shuffle off their rude fat slippers, salaam, and hold out a greasy, grimy bit of paper or packet of papers. These are known among Anglo-Indians as "chits," and constitute the written character bestowed by previous employers. As nearly all Somalis are called either Abdul, Reggel, Muhammad, or Adah, these documents are easily interchangeable, and I have known two men proffer the same "chits" within the space of half an hour. It was therefore wise to insist upon a personal reference also. But as a rule the chaff could be sifted from the wheat in five minutes, for your Somali wears his character upon his sleeve. Some would enter my room with their slippers on, and thereby disqualify themselves at once, for by local etiquette this is a gross and intentional insult. Even the groom behind your dog-cart may not wear his shoes. Others with an impudent temperament would hasten to exhibit their impudence.

I remember one, whose English was almost unintelligible, mentioning that he also spoke French. "Do you speak it better than you do English?" I inquired. "But, sah'b," he expostulated, "I spik Inglees puffickly," and I wished him a puffick good morning. Another tried to cheat me out of three rupees within half an hour of his appearance with fulsome "chits," and I made bitter reflections upon the mistaken good-nature which induces some people to foist their bad servants upon the unsuspecting. To my thinking, it is worse than passing bad money, and ought to be made a felony. No doubt some manliness is required to refuse a character, but the effort should be preached from every pulpit and at every mother's knee. I myself am quite ready to supply sermons on the subject free of charge.

My first choice was a providential one, and I shall have much to say about Abdi, son of Ismail, during this narrative, not only because of his influence upon my journey, but because he was so thoroughly typical of the ideal Somali. There must have been something peculiarly taking about his manners and expression, or I should never have engaged him in the face of several discouraging circumstances. To begin with, he arrived with the man who tried to cheat me of three rupees and seemed to be his close ally. Then his "chits" were by no means enthusiastic; one remarked drily that he had been dismissed for absence without leave; another deplored his religious fanaticism, and his tendency to devote to prayers time which was due to his master. With unconscious

cynicism, it went on to say that "though so religious, Abdi is invariably cheerful," as if the two were hopelessly incompatible. Another drawback was that he knew no Englishman in Aden to give him a personal character. However, I took a fancy to him, and engaged him on the spot as a subordinate servant. Before many days had past, my belief in him had grown so far that I made him my headman, or chief of the staff; before we had travelled many miles I was so struck by his attentive consideration and unfailing resource that I doubled his wages; and by the end of the journey I wanted to bring him back to England.

My shikari—shall I translate him gamekeeper?—was also represented on his "chits" as being inordinately religious, but both he and Abdi must have outgrown this, for they did not even observe Ramadan on the road; they seemed to know that was very wrong, for when I commented upon it to Abdi he assured me in a somewhat shamefaced way that he should make up his arrears of fasting when he returned to Aden, adding, with a twinkle in his eyes, "I no forget, sah'b." This remissness was all the more reprehensible in the case of the shikari, as he had made the pilgrimage to Mecca and traded on the reputation for sanctity which it had conferred upon him. No one ever called him by his name—it was always Hajji, Pilgrim. Neither he nor any of my men ever indulged in that parade of prayer and prostration which is so dear to the zealous Moslem. Only on the question of alcohol was there any evidence of bigotry.

The shikari was a great strapping fellow, the very picture of health and strength ; but when he had eaten too much mutton, he would give way to the most terrible depression. " Oh, sah'b ! " he would exclaim, in his quaint scriptural language, " I have a great pain in my belly. " He had the faculty of irritating me more than any one I ever met, and I would answer roughly, " Hope it'll teach you not to overeat yourself, you swine. " But presently he would double himself up, vow he could carry my gun no further, and plead piteously for medicine. I would produce my flask, and tell him that a few drops of brandy would relieve him at once. He would eye it wistfully and then remark with regret, " Not good for Muham-madan man, sah'b. "

The Pilgrim possessed truly wonderful " chits. " He could dive like a fish, there was no one to rival him as a tracker of game, he was as bold as a lion, nothing could ever tire him, and so forth. I ascertained also that he was a man of some position at Aden, possessing boats of his own, and I gathered that it was rather a favour on his part to consent to accompany me. In practice I found him the stupidest of mortals. He wore on his great ugly face an habitual grin, or rather a contortion which did duty for a grin ; when his face was in repose, his mouth would remain wide open, like that of a drowsy dog hoping to catch flies without taking any trouble. Whenever I caught sight of him I longed to kick him ; I felt I could have killed him for his grin ; and his stolid reception of my insults would increase my



hatred an hundredfold. Unlike any other Somali, he was entirely destitute of a sense of humour and a sense of cleanliness. Wherever he went, there was always a thick black cluster of thousands of flies congregated upon his grimy back. Like every other Somali, he always carried a gun so that it should be pointing straight at me. If he walked in front, it would be poised at right angles over his shoulder; if he walked behind, he swung it in his hand so as to keep my back well covered. When I was riding, I would often find that six or eight men were escorting me, each with a gun pointed straight at me. I would remonstrate and take some trouble to explain how guns should be carried; great gratitude would be expressed to me for the lesson, and five minutes later I would find that every one had returned unconsciously to his original position. The Pilgrim could not even clean a gun properly, and as to his tracking of game, I believe I surpassed him at it before I had had a week's experience.

I engaged another man as headman on the strength of "chits" which were as unfairly enthusiastic as those of the Pilgrim. They also alluded to religious fanaticism, but I had begun to disbelieve in its drawbacks. However, I soon found that if ever I turned my back for five minutes he would rush off to the nearest piece of sand and prostrate himself in prayers which seemed to last for ever. He was the very antithesis of old Daddy Longlegs. He rarely carried out any order I gave him, and always seemed to think it an ample excuse that he had been saying his prayers. Indeed



he would tell me this in a tone of solemn reproof, as if to imply that I must be a sad infidel if I ever desired him to do anything else. Fortunately I discovered his character before I left Aden, and dispensed with his services, to his infinite amazement.

Besides Abdi and the Pilgrim, I engaged there Reggel, my cook, a little man of infinite cheeriness, who never grew tired or discontented, whose smiling face was always an infallible remedy against depression, and, better still, whose culinary powers were little short of marvellous. In whatever desolate region we might chance to be, he would quickly collect three stones and a little brushwood, and in half an hour or so I was made happy with an excellent dinner, such as would satisfy most people at a London tavern. His English also afforded me unceasing delight. I shall never forget the solemn, unconscious way in which he asked me one day, "What time you like your grub, sah'b?" He used to keep the purse for current expenses, and his accounts would often be screamingly funny. "Mule's grub" was an item which never failed to delight me.

On reaching Zaila I asked our Consul, Mr. Harold, what other servants I should require. He said that with my three men from Aden, the two soldiers he was going to lend me, a syce and two tent-boys from Zaila, I should have enough to take me up to Harrar. His ideas of choosing servants were far simpler than mine. At his beck, three blacks in ragged sheets and loincloths turned up one morning and stood in line on the sand in front of the Consulate. We leaned

over the verandah, and surveyed them. They each stood on one leg, holding the other foot in one hand, the favourite Somali way of standing at ease. He asked them which was the syce, and they began to consult among themselves—a proceeding which might have implied that they all knew how to look after a mule, but which really meant, as I surmised, that they were all equally ignorant. However, the lot fell at last upon an ugly, slouching youth. Mr. Harold asked their names and wages, and I was told to consider them engaged. One of the tent-boys was called Dimbil, a solemn little man with a beard, reminding me of a respectable English butler; the other looked very strong, but turned out very lazy, and had to be sent home from Harrar as an example. A Somali cannot say the word tent, so the pair came to be known as “the tomboys.” Nadif, the syce, was very disheartening at first; he scarcely knew the mule’s head from its tail, and it seemed as though I should never teach him to put on a saddle and bridle. However, he was willing and energetic, he never showed signs of fatigue, even after running all day, and I have no doubt future employers will find him quite useful.

I have now introduced the nucleus of my retinue, and will leave them to tell their own story in future chapters of my narrative. Apart from the fun to be derived from their acute sense of humour, they are worth the attention of intending travellers. Again and again I met old hardened explorers who got on very badly with their servants, so I feel that with all

my inexperience, I instinctively picked up the knack of managing Somalis, and I hope that I may impart this incidentally to others. Mr. Harold is of opinion that most people make a mistake in bringing over their subordinate servants from Berbera or Aden, and it is certainly true that one should take Zaila men for a journey through the country of the Issas, who are their tribesmen. The tribal feeling is very strong, and in the unlikely event of a disturbance it would be a great advantage to have friends at court.

## Chapter III

### BRITISH SOMALILAND

A Leap in the Dark—From Asia to Africa—Berbera—Bulhar—Zaila  
—A Colonial Triumph—Somali Constabulary—Administration  
—Security—A British Proconsul at Work—The Irish of Africa  
—Murder as a Sport.

SAID an old Indian captain on the P. and O. steamer, "Several of us were talking about you and your journey to Abyssinia in the smoking-room last night, and we all agreed that we had never heard of anything so vague and haphazard in the way of an expedition. For my part I don't believe you'll get any nearer to Abyssinia than Aden."

I laughed it off, but I felt some qualms at this ill-omened remark; for once upon a time I announced that I was going to Greenland, and some one said to me, "I don't believe you'll get any nearer to Greenland than Greenwich," which turned out to be the case.

As I made my leap in the dark, my evil forebodings were deepened by the recommendations of kind friends who thought I lacked caution. When I arrived on board the R.I.M.S. *Minto* on Friday afternoon, December 1, 1899, there were loud exclamations over the two porters, who followed me with sacks of silver

coins on their heads. To go into wild regions with such a display of wealth was courting disaster, I was told. I retorted upon my critics, without deep conviction, perhaps, that the caravan route through Somaliland and Abyssinia was as safe as Piccadilly, but they returned that, if I walked down Piccadilly at night-time exhibiting sacks full of silver, I might chance to lose a good many of them. In the end I found an amiable merchant at Zaila, who took my cumbrous coins and gave me a letter of credit upon Harrar, where further credit was arranged for Addis Ababa, the capital of Abyssinia.

I left the Garden of Aden with every regret, but the wrench of severing myself from civilisation was tempered by the pleasant company I found on board the *Minto*. Besides the officers of the ship I found congenial fellow-passengers in several members of the Aden garrison, some convoying troops to the Somali coast, others seeking ozone after a touch of fever, and others preparing to make scientific observations at Perim. There were also a couple of tame cheetah cubs, the peculiar pets of the captain. They were quite at home on board, and afforded constant amusement by their antics and an odd whistling noise, which one of the officers was able to imitate to perfection. The cheetah is, I believe, the connecting link between the dog and the cat, and possesses all the best qualities of both. An acquaintance of mine once brought one home from these parts and reduced it to absolute tameness, so that it would beg and trust and exhibit every variety of parlour trick. His great amusement



was to take it out for strolls about Kensington, when it would drive old ladies crazy by trying to play with their lap-dogs. One day it terrified a man from the Stores, who espied it at the door and dropped a basketful of glass, which was cast down and shivered to pieces. At last it grew so unpopular that he had



BERBERA.

to dispose of it, but he has never ceased to regret its loss.

Next day we reached Berbera, which looked exactly like the ordinary African coast town such as every book of adventure describes a hundred times. A low line of white houses and straw huts just showed above the skyline at the edge of a sandy plain, a flagstaff standing out to mark the residence of Colonel Sadler,

the British Consul-General. Distant hills were just discernible in the haze behind. The glare was blinding, but a pleasant breeze tempered the furious heat. Ships cannot come near to the town, so there was a tedious pull to the shore, then a scramble of some ten feet up a sheer wall at the end of the pier, involving



BERBERA.

much barking of shins. A stroll round the town revealed nothing of absorbing interest. One quarter was composed entirely of glistening whitewashed houses, but the greater part consisted of dingy cabins covered with ragged matting. The streets were fairly broad and straight, having been rebuilt under European direction after a fire. Tall, thin Somalis stalked about carrying long white staves over their shoulders. Most

of them were clad in drab sacking, but some young dandies wore bright scarlet sashes of some fluffy material over their shoulders and loins. I came upon a curious water-tank, enclosed in a palisade, and amused myself by photographing the crowds of women of all ages, who were busy filling water-skins there. They also affected scanty drab raiment, but mostly



THE CUSTOM HOUSE AT BERBERA.

wore ornaments of silver and amber round their necks. Shops were few. Occasionally I descried a coffee-house, where crowds of natives were chattering over their cups both indoors and, Parisian fashion, out into the street. I was shown a shop kept by a Jew and told that he "sold everything," but I could not make out that this comprehensive term meant much more

than clothes and sugar, the clothes being restricted to the ubiquitous drab sacking. The Butchers' bazaar was more curious than appetising. It consisted of a framework of beams, from which were suspended scraggy scraps of what I was inclined to mistake for cat's-meat. Colonel Sadler told me there was nothing to buy at Berbera but a few Somali shields and spears.

After nightfall the captain and I set out again from the *Minto* to dine on shore. Never have I known such pitch darkness anywhere. The only lights were those of Colonel Sadler's house and the long shivers of phosphorus set going by every stroke of the oars. Presently a servant appeared on the beach with a lantern, and we made straight for him, with the result that we were speedily stranded on a shoal. Here a large fish suddenly leaped on board. This is considered a very lucky omen by the sailors, but these fish have very sharp noses and have been known to black or gouge out an eye.

At last we reached the pier, and, after repeating our morning's scramble in dress clothes, had the pleasure of wading some distance through deep sand. However, we were rewarded by a very pleasant dinner, as well as by the privilege of making acquaintance with Colonel Sadler's delightful dog. Among his many accomplishments is that of finding any object, which he has been given to smell, wherever it may be hidden. He has a great partiality for whiskey, and sometimes gratifies it with a distinct sense of humour. One very thirsty evening a guest was reclining in one of Colonel Sadler's long cane lounges on the verandah.



He placed a full tumbler of whiskey and soda by his side and proceeded to converse. Presently he stretched out his hand for his glass and gave a great start on finding it was empty. He was convinced that he had put it down full a few minutes before, equally positive that he had not touched it; yet how could this liquid have disappeared without disturbing the glass? It was as uncanny as Maupassant's description of the "Horla," a horrid vampire which drank up the glasses of water at a man's bedside before driving him mad; but it was all explained when the dog emerged wagging his tail and reeking indecently of spirits.

Next day we stood off Bulhar, where a British Consul named Jones resides in solitary monotonous gloom. The usual row of square houses and huts on the beach with the usual flagstaff and distant hills did not invite me to brave the surf. Those who did so were drenched on their way ashore and then had to choose between wading in or being carried with their legs round Somalis' necks. I preferred to remain and roll at anchor all day.

On Monday, December 4th, we reached Zaila, and I took reluctant leave of my pleasant hosts of the *Minto*. Seen from the sea the town is the exact counterpart of Berbera and Bulhar, and does not smile upon a traveller. There were again the usual difficulties in landing, and when the flat Somali boat touched ground I was carried in on a chair held aloft in the air. Mr. Harold kindly put me up at the Consulate during the two days I had to wait for final



preparations, and he gave me much interesting information about Zaila and the Somali Coast Protectorate as well as all sorts of useful help and advice for my journey. Zaila, unlike Berbera, has not enjoyed the advantage of a conflagration, and the streets are accordingly as haphazard and irregular as anywhere in the East. The fire, however, was only very narrowly avoided not long ago, when several



ZAILA. THE MARKET SQUARE.  
(*Photograph by CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.*)

hundred Abyssinians passed through on a mission to delimitate the Italian frontier. One of them beguiled the interval of waiting by drenching a cat with petroleum, setting light to him and letting him run full tilt into the town in his panic. Mr. Harold naturally protested against this barbarity. He was at first met by a blank denial, but when he produced proofs there was much blustering of indignation, and

the chief of the Abyssinians volunteered to have the offender's arm chopped off.

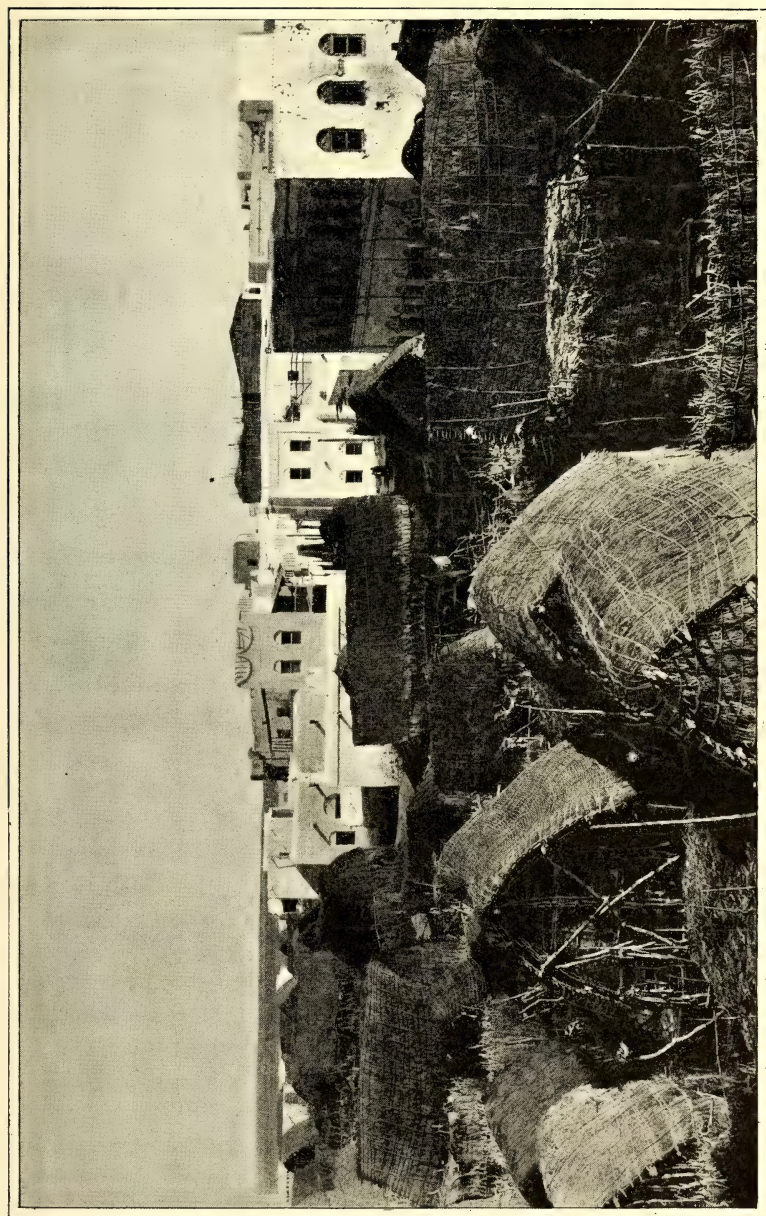
Details of administration in a distant African protectorate may not sound very exciting at the first blush, but these are moments of patriotism, and I feel confident that every one of my readers will thrill with pride over the wonderful work which is being carried



A STREET IN ZAILA.

on among barbarous tribesmen by a mere handful, less than a handful, of our countrymen. The marvel will be best laid bare by a comparison of British Somaliland with the pitiful little colony which dignifies itself with the name of French Somaliland. This consists nominally of some 5,000 square miles, but there is no effective dominion for more than a mile or





ZAILA.  
*Photograph by CAPTAIN HARRINGTON.)*



two inland. Yet it affords occupation for a whole army of greedy French officials—governors, prefects, judges, soldiers, customs' men, with all their deputies and subordinates—and it costs the home Government no less than 400,000 francs a year. We, on the other hand, exercise a very real and efficient rule over a country which is 75 by 80 by 80 by 160 miles in extent, and has two large towns, the smaller with a population of 10,000 souls. All this is administered by four Englishmen, and is quite self-supporting, the whole expenses being defrayed without a penny-worth of help from the British exchequer. Until a few years ago the Somali Protectorate was under the Indian Government, being ruled from Aden, which is ruled from Bombay. Then, for some reason which I have not been able to appreciate, the jurisdiction was transferred to the Foreign Office, which seems not to take due interest and pride in its acquisition. The change, however, has not affected the administration, except to alter the titles of the officials. The Political Resident at Berbera is now styled Consul-General, and his deputy at Zaila has become a Consul—an utterly misleading nomenclature in either case. They are really the very efficient governors of an excellent colony, and would probably find more suitable appreciation at the hands of the Colonial Office.

The efficiency of the administration may be gauged by the fact that it has now been found safe to withdraw the small garrison of Bombay Infantry which were quartered on the Somali coast. They left for good and all on the 5th of March, and the whole



district is now protected by a force nominally consisting of 30 Soudanese and 52 Somali police, actually some 10 short of that number at the present moment. The Somalis are taking very kindly to their constabulary work, and display much military promise. This is of course due to the infinite pains and splendid ability which have been devoted to their training, and it is safe to say that neither the French nor any other nation could have accomplished similar work. It is amusing to hear the Somalis at drill, giving their words of command (the only English they know) in a strange, broken accent, which suggests a phonograph gone wrong. But they must not be laughed at, for they are evidently very proud of their service.

That so large a tract of country can be governed so cheaply, so simply, and at the same time so efficiently, speaks volumes, as Mr. Harold, our Consul at Zaila, never tires of telling me, for the good qualities of the Somalis. It speaks volumes also, as he is too modest to remark, for the judgment and ability of their administrators. The postal administration may seem a small matter, but it deserves mention as a successful detail. Indeed, to me it was by no means a detail, for the monotony of my journey was largely relieved by the regular receipt of my mails. A postman on a fast riding-camel sets out every week from Zaila and Harrar, covering the distance of nearly 200 miles between those places in three and a half days. The service is perfectly safe and regular, and contrasts strikingly with the French post between Jibuti and Harrar, which issues fanciful stamps and voluminous

rules but is so irregular that even the French Minister to Abyssinia prefers to avail himself of our superior arrangements. Doubtless also he dreads the inquisitiveness of the *cabinet noir*, which is part and parcel of all French administration. Acting on his usual principles, Mr. Harold has determined to make the post self-supporting, and as much as 5d. per



ZAILA. THE BRITISH POSTMAN.

half-ounce has to be paid for a letter to Harrar in addition to the ordinary postage. Worse still, several camels died lately, and he was obliged to double his rates the other day. Accordingly I found that I was charged some 26s. for a parcel of three or four monthly magazines. This seemed rather stiff at the first blush, but the arrival of a mail is so very precious

in the desert that no one can grudge his quota, and I was bound to reflect that if I had had to organise my own relays of messengers I should have had to pay a far prettier penny.

Perhaps the most striking fact about the triumph of our organisation is the perfect security which has been established without bloodshed or terrorism in British Somaliland. In another chapter I shall describe the strange barbaric pride which your Somali takes in the killing of men. To check such an instinct and render a caravan route through the desert safe as Piccadilly, may warrant much boasting. Two instances will suffice to exhibit the security of property which has been established. Not long ago two men sufficed to escort a sum of 60,000 silver dollars down to the coast without molestation, though the whole countryside must have known the nature of their burthen. Only once within recent years has there been a complaint of serious robbery, and though that took place outside British jurisdiction, the sequel proved most satisfactory to British prestige. A certain Russian complained that he had been robbed of a thousand dollars (say £100), which he had carelessly left under the flap of his tent while camping at Bia Kaboba. Now that place is not in our territory, but the Russian innuendo, that the money had disappeared when a British postman was passing, put Mr. Harold on his mettle. He began by pointing out that on the day in question the postmen must have been several days' marches away, and he might have rested content with this alibi. But his good-

nature and his belief in his organisation impelled him to recover the money. He applied to the tribes, not for the surrender, but for the discovery of the culprit, with whom they should be left to deal according to their own customs; for it is a point of pride with them to detect and punish crime, but not to deliver over a criminal to the stranger's hand. The chiefs took the matter up at once, and were not long in tracing the crime to two discharged Somalis. One had his share of 500 dollars still upon him, and was made to give it up at once. He had changed part of it into camels, but no matter, it could be changed back again. The other had buried his in small sums all over the desert, but stoutly maintained his ignorance of the whole affair. So the chiefs tied him up to a tree and sat down to wait. Time is not money in the desert, so they waited many days, giving the man just enough food to keep body and soul together. After about a week he consented to indicate the locality of part of his hoard. He was taken to the place and made to dig it up. Then he was tied to another tree, and the chiefs again awaited his pleasure. In process of time he revealed all his hiding-places, save one where his marks had been destroyed by the elements. It was a labour of infinite patience, and the chiefs had to wait long intervals and traverse long distances between each revelation, but in the end they contrived to return all the money save eleven dollars, and it was satisfactory to find that they expected no reward for all their trouble. The honour of their tribe had been cleared, and that was sufficient reward for them. Mr.



Harold is probably right in saying that in no other country on earth could money have been recovered in this way, and the incident is very characteristic of Somali justice.

A visit to the Court House at Zaila also affords an instructive picture of the Somali character, and helps to explain the causes of the success of our colonial empire. A Frenchman (to take the extreme contrast) attempts to govern natives according to European methods, and the only result is to irritate and perplex them. An Englishman adapts his code to the better side of native tradition ; his subjects find that he treats them firmly and honourably, yet at the same time in a way which their hereditary instincts teach them to consider reasonable. The thing requires the patience of many saints, but this patience is amply rewarded. Coming into the Court House any morning, you find surging crowds of natives—men, women, and children—all waiting to enjoy a field-day at the expense of the English Governor. Every Somali is a born litigant, and as there are no costs under the British Protectorate, he seizes every possible pretext to come into court. Where else in the world could you find such an institution as free justice? Where else would it not be dismissed as an hopelessly Utopian chimerical idea?

Mr. Harold takes his seat upon the Bench, and the first case is called on. With so many litigants waiting to be heard, it is natural that he should wish to arrive at summary settlements. But who shall presume to try to hustle the East? A Somali, above all others,



may not be hurried, for he is convinced that you cannot possibly understand him unless he repeats himself at least a dozen times. Here is a typical case. An old woman steps forward and says laconically, "I want——" Then she pauses to see if she has really been heard, and she looks round the court to air her vanity.

MR. HAROLD (*suavely*): "Well, what do you want?"

OLD WOMAN (*emphatically*): "I want——"

MR. HAROLD (*pleadingly*): "Yes, what is it you want?"

OLD WOMAN (*as though addressing a very stupid person*): "I want——"

MR. HAROLD (*resignedly*): "I am waiting to hear what you want."

OLD WOMAN (*monotonously*): "I want——"

MR. HAROLD: "Well?"

OLD WOMAN: "I want——"

MR. HAROLD: "? ? ? ? ? ?"

OLD WOMAN: "I want justice."

MR. HAROLD: "Tell me your grievance as quickly as you can. There are many others waiting."

OLD WOMAN (*stolidly*): "I want justice."

This phrase she repeats at least six times, and then at last, with infinite circumlocution, she proceeds to tell her tale.

OLD WOMAN (*several times*): "I was sitting under a tree in the desert."

MR. HAROLD: "You have said that before. Tell me what happened."

OLD WOMAN (*several times more, with satisfied*

*pauses in between*) : " I was sitting under a tree in the desert."

MR. HAROLD (*at last*) : " If you don't proceed I shall have to call the next case."

OLD WOMAN (*several times*) : " It was a very large tree."

This is followed by all sorts of irrelevant details, each extracted very laboriously and repeated so often that even the Somalis begin to manifest impatience. At last the old woman blurts out suddenly, in the same monotonous tones with which she has related incongruous facts about the desert or trees or shade or water, " Some men came and stole all my camels." Now we have something to go upon, and in the course of an hour or so we shall extort other salient facts, who carried off the camels, how many there were, and so forth. Presently Mr. Harold chances to ask, " When did all this happen?" and the old woman answers in the most matter-of-fact way, " About fourteen years ago."

Why did she wait all this while to make her complaint? Not for a moment is she at a loss for an answer—no Somali ever is. She has had other concerns, she has been travelling about in various parts of the interior, and after all she did not suppose there was any reason for immediate action. Anyhow, she has now come to demand restitution. The defendant is called, admits the facts, and expresses his willingness to restore such camels as may still survive ; but these are not many. The old woman is, however, quite ready for him there. She has at her fingers'

ends the whole history and genealogy of all the camels during all the years which have elapsed since she lost them. The white female camel with the black spot on its back has had twelve young, eight of which are still alive ; so many were males and so many were females, and their offspring was such and such a number. The dark brindled camel had so many children, and so many grandchildren : it is all as pat as a chapter in the Old Testament. The defendant retorts with minute accounts of his expenditure upon each and every stolen camel and its children and children's children. The narrative is endless, for if there is one trait more acutely developed in your Somali than his sense of humour, it is his astounding memory. I am told that this is very common among people who cannot read and write, but even so I believe the Somali is unrivalled. The case is one for a typical Kadi, and Mr. Harold must have recourse to the methods of the Kadi, but somehow or other he contrives to give satisfaction in this and a hundred other equally perplexing cases. Very often the plaintiff and defendant make absolutely contradictory statements, and there seems no possibility of ascertaining which is lying. One of the litigants has been vehemently positive in his circumstantial assertions, until he is suddenly asked if he will swear to his story. " Oh ! no, I will not do that," he replies quite naturally, and the case is given against him. Another time, a man is quite ready to give all the ordinary oaths, but resolutely refuses to swear by the tomb of some particularly holy sheikh. Or again the judge must rely upon some slight indication ; a

nudge or a wink exchanged between witnesses, for instance, may suffice to decide a case.

All this is inordinately hard work at the best of times, but in the hot weather it taxes a man's strength almost beyond human endurance. Already in the middle of March this year, the heat, I am told, was terrible. At night there seemed to be no air—the atmosphere was still, muggy, close, stuffy, as if a tremendous storm were instantly imminent, and there was consequently no sleep to be had. After 7 a.m. the sun was so scorching that it became risky for a white man to venture out; and indoors, with the blinds down, the thermometer stood at 107°. At 5.30 or 6 p.m. a stroll was possible, but by nine the breeze would drop and the terrible night had to be faced once more. The position of Governor of Berbera or Zaila is certainly not one to be envied in the hot weather. He has no companion but his black servants and the Somalis; travellers have ceased to pass through, and he will not see another white man until the autumn shall come round again. It is indeed wonderful what an Englishman will endure and accomplish in the execution of his duty, and we may well exclaim that the heroes of the kopjes and the battlefields are not the only heroes among the many who contribute, each in his sphere, towards the building up of our empire. The work which Colonel Sadler and Mr. Harold are carrying on at Berbera and Zaila, quietly, unassumingly, and at the same time so successfully, almost reconciles me to the intrusion of civilisation in Africa.

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“ I dive ! I dive ! ”

For an hour or so we of the good ship *Caledonia* had been straining our eyes to take stock of the stronghold of Aden. The long voyage was drawing to a close, and we were putting finishing touches to short-lived acquaintances. We became suddenly aware of a small fleet of flat-bottomed boats hovering feverishly around.

“ I dive ! I dive ! ”

Ten days unrelieved by incidents had made us singularly alert, and we hurried to the sides in obedience to this penetrating call.

The first impression of Somalis was very far from encouraging. We were instinctively reminded of Doré's illustrations of the *Inferno*, for the boats teemed with naked youths, so naked that they wore not even a single hair upon their skinny, jet-black bodies ; and the long bald heads, with popping wall-eyes and long, projecting ears, completed so saturnine an effect that we might be approaching Charon's ferry.

“ I dive ! I dive ! ”

God bless my soul, but they do dive ! Copper coins they scorn, and you may cast into the water anything from slender pice to a big brown penny without evoking more than a contemptuous grin. You might as hopefully throw bread to a dog who performs for no less guerdon than a sweet biscuit. But toss out any silver money, down to a sixpence or even the humble two-anna piece, and in a trice a black devil whistles through the air, shoots into the sea, emerges in no



time with his trophy, and clamours breathlessly for fresh ordeals : “ I dive ! I dive ! I dive ! ”

Sharks abound here, ravening, they also, after their prey, and the spectacle appeals to that instinct which renders dangerous exploits a delight to witness from a safe distance. Some time ago a young diver had his head bitten off. Quite recently another was dragged right under the keel of a ship and only escaped with the loss of his two legs, leaving a thin red line of blood behind him in the sea. One of the little fellows has only one arm, and it is supposed that the sharks have taken the other, so the coins shower thickest around him. But I begin to wonder whether it is not a mistaken kindness.

The Somalis certainly improve on closer acquaintance. To begin with, they enjoy a chronic, imperturbable good-humour ; there is always a cheery grin upon their otherwise satanical countenances. Nor have they the gross, bestial appearance of the ordinary negro, with his thick lips and woolly hair. Save for the deep darkness of their skins and the scantiness of their raiment, they might pass for Europeans of some refinement. It must be a primæval sense of decency which prompts them to pluck their armpits and scar their backs to eradicate every vestige of down. On the march they devote every spare instant to removing hairs and brushing their glistening teeth. A few do not shave their heads, but wear thick matted hair some six or eight inches long, giving them the appearance of the domestic Turk's head. But if the hair is allowed to grow, it is

only on condition that it shall change its colour. From Aden right away into the uttermost parts of the desert you may meet men with a thick grey scab of lime spread all over their scalps. At first you are inclined to mistake it for evidence of some horrible disease. Presently you perceive the effects. Here is a fellow with a maroon mat of hair, yonder struts another beneath a bleached shock like a bobtailed wig without the bobtail. I vow he wears powder. "No, sah'b," says Abdi laconically, "fat." There may be fat, but I still believe lime is the principal ingredient.

A few hasty facts, to be skipped by those who are less serious than myself. The Somalis occupy the north-east corner of Africa, say from Bab-el-Mandeb, the gate of the Red Sea, to the vague regions below Cape Guardafui. No one knows where they came from, the best guess being from an Arab stock, though the Somali language differs essentially from Arabic. Somalis come to Aden, but only to acquire wealth and wives and experience. Directly they have found all they want they return to their own grey land. In this and in so many other respects they have struck me as the Irish of Africa. They are always on the grin, they possess an enormous sense of humour and a very lively imagination, they are extraordinarily considerate and obliging, in fact they will never stick at any lie provided it will please you for the moment. Ask them a distance when you are tired and they will always halve it; find them out and grow cross presently and they are sure to be ready with a merry quip or soothing sympathy. I

believe the Blarney stone must originally have come from some waterless desert in the direction of Ogaden. No one can help liking the Somalis, yet no one can close both eyes to their shortcomings. They are garrulous humbugs and windbags. They have no manners, they make rude noises with their mouths, they laugh in a way that makes you long to kick them, yet you never can be angry with them long. Gratitude is unknown to them; the word thanks does not exist in their language. They are insatiably greedy of money, yet at the same time reckless spend-thrifts. They possess the unusual combination of vanity and pride. A coloured blazer with bright buttons makes a peacock of the best, yet he never loses his dignity. Nowhere have I met any human beings so sensitive to blame or sneer. Theirs is a very high-strung nature. They are hopeless cowards about facing a remote danger. See how they run across a desert where rumour points to possible ambuscades! Yet on a sudden emergency they will display plenty of spirit. Like the Irish, they are always spoiling for a fight; in lieu of shillelaghs they always carry their spears.

I am sure they could never found a Somali state. They are too volatile and irresponsible. But they are intensely amenable to strict discipline, and a Parnell or a Mahdi could do what he pleased with them. They have certainly made excellent soldiers whenever the experiment has been tried, and I am told that at Aden they have proved superlative detectives. This I can well believe, for I observed that craft

and curiosity were highly developed in their character. They are naturally lazy, and at home make their women do most of the work, yet for an object they will rarely spare themselves. At Aden they work very hard, and put up with a great deal until they have acquired enough fortune to secure them power and influence in their own country. What they covet most of all is to be taken into Africa by an European traveller. They enjoy the journey through Somaliland, particularly if they are among their own tribesmen, but they detest the cold and wet, the racial and religious animosity, the gloom and the hardships which confront them in Abyssinia. Yet they reflect that they have no temptation or opportunity to spend money, and that when they return they will be possessors of a fine little nest-egg, which must raise their social status considerably. On the march their one idea is to please you so that you may pay them well and give them good "chits" when you return. If you are easy-going, they will take every advantage; if you are severe, they will very quickly take the measure of your severity and do just as much work as will keep you satisfied—not a jot more.

The worst point about them is their tendency to regard murder as a sport. During my passage through the desert I noticed numerous cairns from time to time. They consisted of a kind of stone altar surrounded at a respectful distance by a stone wall, either circular or square. Outside this were a number of upright slabs, like milestones, some of which were surmounted with lumps of quartz. At first I thought

all this must have some religious significance, but eventually I learned that here were the tombs of Somali braves, each slab recording a murder and the quartz intimating that a man had been killed with his steed. I did not approve of the desecration of the Mahdi's tomb, but I venture to submit that the Government might do well to raze these mausoleums of murder. One day we passed a number of young men, who strutted about as though hugely proud of themselves. They carried spears longer than those of the usual Somalis, their hair projected in thick wig-like mats, and some of them—those, I learned, who had slain many men—wore feathery tufts on the top of their heads.

One of the braves was pointed out to me with pride by the Pilgrim, who remarked, "He kill plenty men." The brave saw he was being noticed and came up to show himself off. He looked very young and wore a very self-conscious smile as he exhibited a horse's tail which was attached to his shield as the trophy of a murder. He also drew my attention to three brass bands on his spear.

"Three men he killed," the Pilgrim explained cheerfully.

"How did he kill them? In battle?"

"No, no. He kill them any way he can."

I noticed that one of the brass bands was double the thickness of the others, so I asked why.

"He kill that man, very big man, sah'b."

I asked how many more men this precocious youngster intended to kill. The question seemed



to arouse a good deal of interest, and there was a buzz of expectation before he replied. His face gleamed with pleasure and conceit, like that of a cricketer going over his batting averages. At last the answer was transmitted: "He hope at least twenty, thirty, sah'b. As many he can."

Afterwards I felt a little uncomfortable to reflect that I had shaken hands with a murderer.

## Chapter IV

### THROUGH THE LAND OF LIONS

Loading Camels—Engaging a Caravan—The Plunge—Passive Resistance—Somali Humour—A Grand Palaver—The Pilgrim's Progress—The Freedom of the Desert—The Monotony of the March—The Desert Described—Gildessa—A Barbaric Dance—A Pagan Love-rite.

I WAS awakened early on the morning of the 6th of December, 1899, by a great hubbub outside the Consulate at Zaila. It sounded as though a free fight were in progress. There were loud war-whoops accompanied by a hoarse rumbling chorus of discontent. The war-whoops resolved themselves into broad Scots, and I would have wagered that I distinguished importunate outcries of "Whaur air ma boots?" "Whaur air ma breeks?" I rubbed my eyes and wondered whether a magical carpet had wafted me to the Kyles of Bute, or whether a Highland regiment had suddenly landed upon the Somali coast. Yet all the yelling was punctuated by that particularly silly noise, which is exclusively associated with the expression of a camel's feelings. I wrapped a sheet around me and made my way out on to the verandah. The sight which I beheld served to warrant the worst alarms. A dense mob of angry blacks—very angry blacks—was howling with rage,

gesticulating, hustling, and even brandishing long spears. Worst of all, it was my baggage that had provoked all this fury. Certain packages were being scrambled for like oranges, others were being thrown about like cricket balls. But the Mad Mullah had not swooped down upon Zaila. This was only the usual every-day preliminary to the departure of a caravan. The cries which I had mistaken for Scots were merely the favourite Somali word "Wariya!" (I say, Hallo), with which every sentence invariably opens. As for the spears, a Somali would no more think of walking out without them than a German officer of leaving his spurs at home. As for the wrath, it must be remembered that the Irish of Africa are accustomed to express every emotion far more emphatically than they really mean.

A word of explanation must now be pardoned. To engage a caravan you bargain with an abane, or contractor. He surveys your chattels and proposes a price per load, by which he means per pair of camels. His favourite chattels are soft bales; he dislikes hard boxes; cases of cartridges he positively detests. And these sentiments affect the cost of your journey considerably. You agree upon a price, and then your troubles begin. He will try to make you engage far more camels than you need. He will return again and again with all sorts of extra demands for fees for himself and for extra pay in order to travel extra fast. The camels do not belong to him but to a number of men, each owning two or three or four. These men go with you; the abane does not, but

he sets over them the richest or most influential. At the best this individual has very little authority over his fellows, and you must always be prepared to fight your own battles. In doing so you must be very firm, but you must also exercise tact, extraordinary tact, for your Somali has all the pride of a Highland laird. If you injure his dignity, you may find one fine morning that he has decamped with all his camels,



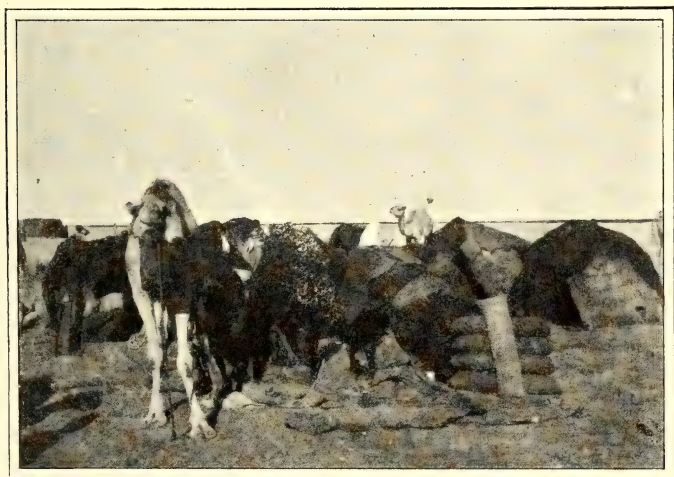
LOADING A CAMEL.

*(Photograph by CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.)*

leaving the precise amount of your advance money in Maria Theresa dollars at your tent door. This would not be disastrous, but it would be a nuisance. You would have to send one of your servants to the coast and wait till fresh camels could arrive. Meanwhile you would amuse yourself with shooting.

The result of different camels belonging to different men is that each man wants to single out the softest

loads. However, after a great deal of wrangling, which amuses a Somali as much as it does an Irishman, the troubles are composed. You are implored to take four more camels, you compromise with two, the loads are adjusted and the caravan sets out with a great parade of leisurely dignity. The work of loading is rather artistic, or at the least ingenious. First a number of very hairy mats



CAMEL-MATS USED AS TENTS.  
(*Photograph by* CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.)

are placed upon the beast's back. Then cross-poles are rudely attached, and to these your luggage is lashed. When camping-time comes the mats and poles are turned into rudimentary tents for the camelmen.

To return to the wrangle. It seemed to have no end. I took my tub, I dressed, I broke my fast, still all morn long the noise of battle raged. It never grew



worse and it never grew better. Whenever I peered out to look, I beheld the same tug-of-war over my boxes, the same angry black faces, the same quivering spears. At last the storm seemed to abate a little, there was merely a ground-swell of irritation, and I found the process of loading had begun. First the mats were swung up, then the poles were placed over them, and as the boxes were affixed the plaint of the camels rose above the protests of the men. For a long time I could not decide what it was that this ridiculous jeremiad recalled. Then all at once I remembered: it was the operation of gargling magnified an hundredfold. Guggle-guggle-guggle-guggle-guggle-wahrrrrrr! Such is the impatient camel's speech.

The last knot is tied and the beast must arise. Its keeper slaps it on the knee and looks round like a conjuror about to perform a trick. The unwieldy mass surges and shoots itself up into the air. Will it acquiesce, or will it remember proverbial privileges about the last straw? It is a deliberate beast, and takes some time to make up its mind. Then it either runs amok, tries to rub off its burthen, rolls recklessly in the sand, bolts, clatters tin pans, swings its load beneath its belly, and generally makes a fool of itself; or else it submits to be tied up in file, still grumbling and grudging, for it can never be satisfied.

Those files of camels: they are my liveliest recollection of the desert, the chief characteristic of a caravan. A string round the nose of each attaches it to the tail of its predecessor, yet it perceives no humiliation, but stalks forward with infinitely majestic

gait, staring superciliously to right and left with head high in air. To watch this hour after hour you would vow that even a pack of wolves in red-hot pursuit could never discompose such sublime equanimity. Yet presently the sudden opening of an umbrella or the swerving of a mule will set the whole file in a panic.

As for the evil faces of the camelmen, they turned out to mean little more than a display of petulance at the outset. Once away, the fellows were always very respectful, but I felt all the time that I must be upon my guard, that they were trying it on.

They began to try it on at my first encampment. Scarcely had I finished my meal and lit my cigarette before Abdi introduced a deputation. The camelmen had no food or money for the journey! I had, however, been warned to expect this demand and refuse it, so I pointed out suavely that I had paid all my dues to the abane at Zaila. Yes, but he had taken everything and had made no provision for them. In that case, I replied, some one had better be sent back to bring on provisions after them. If they went well I would give them a sheep when we had crossed the two days' waterless desert, and they should have backshish when I parted from them at Gildessa. If they gave me trouble, they should not have another anna, no, nor so much as the gizzard of a twopenny chicken. They saw that I knew, so they acquiesced at once, and went off vowing that I was their father and mother.

Starting off into the unknown desert was just like

jumping off a plank into a very cold swimming-bath. I put off the evil moment again and again. I dallied over each mouthful all through my last civilised lunch. I prolonged each puff of my cigar as I lolled for the last time in a really luxurious armchair. By way of cheering me up, Mr. Harold, who has a keen sense of humour, related all sorts of misadventures, which had befallen travellers in the waterless desert which I was to enter next day. "A young Belgian came here not so very long ago full of delight over the prospect of his expedition. He sat just where you are sitting now; I thought he was a bit confident and I told him so, but he was young and would not listen to advice. Well, he started off, just as you are going to do, in the afternoon for Warabot, where the desert begins, ten miles away. He camped there and went on at about three o'clock next morning for Ma'anda, the big hill which stands out as the one landmark half-way across the desert. He plodded straight on for eight hours, the sun grew hotter and hotter, and directly the camp had been pitched all the men flung themselves down on the ground and fell asleep. When they awoke in the afternoon they found to their amazement that their master had disappeared. At first they could scarcely believe it, and asked each other whether the Jinn had carried him off. They proceeded to search for him in every direction, but there was never a trace to be found anywhere. All night they searched and a greater part of next day, though a dust storm arose so blinding that it was impossible to see two yards ahead. At last

they remembered how little water they had with them, and they agreed that they must push on to save their own lives. As it was, they very nearly failed to reach the other side of the waterless desert at Hensa. Several of them were so much overcome by thirst that they had to lie down gasping in the sand till water could be brought to them. Having refreshed themselves and refilled their barrels, they toiled back and made fresh search ; they came and reported to me, and I instituted a regular systematic hunt, but all in vain. The young Belgian had been as completely swallowed up by the desert as he might have been by the sea."

"Then you have no idea what happened to him?"

"Wait a bit. I am coming to that. Several months later the rainy season arrived and nomadic tribes began to come down to the plains, spreading like a flood over the face of the desert, now no longer waterless. And presently a gruesome discovery was reported to me. I rode out and found under a mimosa shrub a skull and a few bones, a rifle and a few shreds of cloth. This was all that remained of the Belgian. Jackals and hyenas had accounted for everything else. He must have seen some game and imprudently started off after it alone. Still more imprudently, he wore nothing on his head but a cloth cap, and nothing on his back but a thin jersey. He must have had a sunstroke and taken refuge under the nearest shrub. No help came, and presently he died. No help could come in time, for he had wandered at least five miles from his camp. That, I am convinced, is the only possible explanation.



If he had been attacked by Somalis, they would certainly not have left his rifle."

"But do Somalis ever attack people?"

There was a curious twinkle in the Consul's eye. As I have already stated, he has a keen sense of humour. "They will not attack a caravan," he replied, as if making a reluctant concession, "but it is considered an exploit among them to kill a man. It does not matter much what sort of man he may be, though of course the killing of a white man would be regarded as a greater exploit than that of a black. For each man a Somali kills he is entitled to wear one brass ring on his spear. Indeed it need not even be a man. I heard of a Somali spearing a woman in the hope that her unborn child would be a male and thereby entitle him to another brass ring. There was an unfortunate Indian not long ago. He came down with a caravan and got knocked up when he was very near the coast. As the distance remaining was so small, he bade the others go on, and, when he had rested, he plodded forward alone. As he had scarcely an anna to bless himself with, one would imagine that he, if any one, was perfectly safe from attack. But a Somali, seeing a feeble old man trudging through the desert alone, seized the opportunity to run up and spear him. I believe I have got the murderer in gaol now, but I have not been able to bring it home conclusively to him yet. Some women saw the Indian followed and speared, but they cannot say for certain whether my prisoner was the culprit."

The hands of the clock were moving faster than



I liked, and it was clear that I must be off if I wished to reach camp in time for dinner. So I took a reluctant leave, mounted my mule, and set out into the unknown.

There is a long brickwork mound or breakwater, say a foot high, marking the confines of Zaila. I believe it is a drain or aqueduct. My mule went on with alacrity until he reached this. Then he absolutely refused to stir. I beat, kicked, coaxed, and cursed him all in vain. It was only when the syce and a "tomboy" had lugged him by the nose, and the soldier of my escort had prodded him with his gun for about ten minutes that he could be induced to cross the border and embark upon his thousand-mile journey. My ears still rang with the Consul's tales of murder and sunstroke, and I could not but mislike the omen. Still there was a certain charm of novelty to a sedentary civilian in setting forth in semi-military khaki raiment, helmet, puttee leggings, belts bristling with cartridges, surrounded by armed men; almost a centurion with absolute authority in the free realm of the desert. What an experience! what fun!

We proceeded at a slow, dignified pace over very flat country, like the seashore at low tide only harder, here and there were sparkling white incrustations suggestive of salt crystals; through this was a broad beaten track. Beaten indeed! There were thousands and thousands of hoof-marks faintly impressed on the surface; forty centuries looked up at me from this road where caravan had followed caravan throughout untold ages. Miniature crevasses yawned across my

path. I began to find myself among stunted shrubs which bristled with prickles. We passed a camel in difficulties. The soldier and tent-boy went off to assist it, and the syce promptly led me off in the wrong direction where two tracks forked. I shouted for the others, the syce shouted, we both shouted, but all in vain. The camel seemed too interesting to be left. My mule grew impatient and began spinning round and round like a cockroach on a pin.

This first short march seemed very long, though it was full of surprises. I shall never forget the weird impressions of sunset in the shadowless desert. Twilight lasted nearly three-quarters of an hour, in surprising violation of all accepted theories of the tropics. Then I espied a very new moon, the thinnest little silver curl imaginable; I raised my helmet and turned my money in acknowledgment of the omen. I came among lights and trees, full of fantastic effects, every one of them a reminiscence of a fairy tale. Stately blacks kept strutting out into the open and challenging with shields in their hands like the outposts of an army. But where were the expected lights of my camp? Abdi, my butler, suddenly emerged from the darkness, and lo! I was in the midst of my caravan. The camels sat about with necks erect, staring straight in front of them like sphinxes, and chewing the cud in meditative dignity. Boxes, baskets, and bales were scattered about higgledy-piggledy on every hand. Nothing had been unpacked, there were no lamps, no fires, no sign of a tent or table. I protested with energy, only to learn that I had all the keys in

my own pockets, and that the camel which I had passed by the roadside carried my bed and tent. Much groping and consulting of lists ensued before I knew in which of my forty-six packages the lanterns, matches, and needful provisions were concealed. It was not an encouraging outset, but I pressed every one into the bustle, despatched assistance to the missing camel, and soon plumed myself upon the magical evolution of order out of chaos by one white man. Fires came into being, the cook began to cook, the camel turned up, and I was soon washing my face at a camp table outside my tent. Quite a good dinner was created over a furze fire and three small stones. Here is the menu of my first repast in the jungle :—

Consommé de poulet froid (essence of chicken).

Côtelettes de mouton.

Pommes soufflées.

Poulet sauté.

Omelette sucrée.

Pains de gingembre (gingerbread nuts).

Dessert.

Café.

A feeling of contentment crept over me among these novel surroundings. It is true that thousands of moths and other fat insects came to die beside my lamps, but the soothing warm air was heavy laden with subtle scents, there was a blaze of stars overhead, all sorts of ghostly figures flitted about in the firelight, and the roar of millions of crickets all round me was

accompanied by a variety of musical murmurs. What novelty, what poetry, what fun!

As I lay down for the first time on a camp bed, with the winds of the wilderness blowing through a tent, and marked the tramp of my sentinel outside, or caught the gleam of his rifle in the starlight, or heard the grumbles of slumbering camels all round me, I fell a-wondering what the desert would have in store for me on the morrow. Verily had I plunged thousands and thousands of miles through space during the day or so which separated me from the club and dinners and dances and picnics and prize-fights of the Garden of Aden.

Before I left Aden I asked a friend whether he thought I should hold my own with my caravan or become, like Ham the accursed, a servant of servants. He replied with an indulgent smile, "I think that they will wear you down with passive resistance." And that is precisely what did happen. After crossing the waterless desert between Warabot and Hensa, I was asked if I would mind having only an afternoon march on the morrow as the camels needed water. However, the return for this indulgence, really quite as much an indulgence to me as it was to the camels, did not encourage further kindness. After a lazy lunch and an exquisite siesta, I woke up to find the camp still slumbering. I hallooed for Abdi and told him he might pack up my green tent when he liked. He affected much astonishment and exclaimed, "But we are not going on till to-morrow morning!" I replied that I had conceded a great favour in con-

senting to rest all the morning. He went off to consult the head camelman, whom I could hear protesting in querulous besotted tones begotten of too much mutton. Presently I was informed that the camels had all been sent off to feed far away. They could not be collected before five, or more probably six. I replied that I was resolved to start that afternoon at all hazards, even though I had to travel all through the night. The headman must send out at once for the camels. I would stand no nonsense. Abdi went off, and I heard a mixture of loud complaints and drowsy, squeaky arguments. At last he returned and said he had prevailed: the camels had been sent for. By three o'clock they began to be brought in, but I was informed that one camel had strayed and it would be necessary to wait till next morning to find it. I said that even though all the camels were lost I would still go on. A couple of men might remain and search, and the missing camel should carry my water-barrels, which would not be needed for some days. The headman did not like this, but he accepted my orders, and I saw two men sally forth with spears to search for the truant. Then further arguments began. It would not do to leave the barrels as there was no water at the next stage. I consulted my notebook and replied, "I know there is water at Las Ma'an!"

"W'Allah! we cannot possibly reach Las Ma'an to-day. It would be midnight before we were there."

"Nonsense, I know the distance is only thirteen miles. If the camels start now, they will be there



soon after nine! In any case it is pleasant travelling by night."

"You are my father and mother. If you order me, I go; but one camel is lost, the others are far away. . . ." And so forth.

At 3.50 I was informed that the lost camel had been found. I remarked that I thought it would be, and there were some smiles.

Of course I did not get my way about the long march, but on the morrow we managed a little better, and in the evening I ordered tea all round to encourage everybody. They grew quite hilarious over their cups, and I heard one man making a vehement speech, which was punctuated with roars of laughter. I asked Abdi to divert me with a translation of the buffoonery, which proved to savour somewhat of that "new humour," which is no humour at all. It was little more than a long rigmarole about small catastrophies, such as happen to "three men in a boat." "Why does my camel always start last?" quoth the wag. "It really isn't fair. He doesn't like it at all, with his sense of dignity. That is why he bit Nadif's camel on the way and Nadif's camel revenged himself by damaging the sah'b's tin basin. Now what will befall us if the sah'b needs that basin? W'Allah! he will send it back to Zaila to show how badly our camels have behaved. Then will the Burra Sah'b at Zaila send for us and beat us with many sticks." And so forth by the hour.

At last I interrupted all this by inquiring about the morrow's march. It was as though I had thrown a

bucketful of water into the group. The headman and half a dozen others jumped up as if they had been shot, they formed a knot, and all began to gesticulate and talk at once. At last a quiet message emerged from the tumult: "I was their father and mother, and would I please be so very kind as to make to-morrow's march as short as possible?" This was Sunday night, but it was not till Tuesday afternoon that passive resistance really became serious again. I had ordered the evening camp to be pitched at a lovely oasis called Bia Kaboba and I let the caravan go far ahead, as I hoped, while I stalked bustards and oryx. What, then, was my disgust to come upon my encampment at nightfall at a rocky, God-forsaken place called Maramaduis, several hours short of Bia Kaboba. The peculiar vexation lay in the fact that the headman had proposed Maramaduis as our camp and I had sternly refused. As I was preparing to go to bed I heard the camelmen laughing over their success, so I sent word at once that I intended to reach Dalle Malle next day. This was twenty-seven miles off and would mean making up for all the lost time. The laughter ceased abruptly. But by this time I had begun to gauge the force of passive resistance.

And lo! next morning my worst fear was verified. I packed off the caravan quite early without any particular trouble. I had a brush with a lioness on entering the groves of Bia Kaboba, but I hurried on, reflecting over the long march which lay before me. Then of a sudden I espied some camels, some cases, some tents, all suspiciously like mine. It was not

nine in the morning. Yet here were the camp pitched, the men lounging about, fetching water or preparing to cook, the camels let loose to graze—in fact every prospect of a prolonged stay. This was flagrant disobedience at last, and my fury moved me to bestir myself. I sent for the headman and rated him soundly, insisting that the camels should be reloaded and the march resumed at once. He acquiesced sullenly, and I sat down under a tree while his subordinates were being collected.

Presently nine men approached me with their spears and staves for a grand palaver of remonstrance. Eight of them squatted on their haunches while their spokesman stood up and embarked upon an impassioned harangue. He held a long wand in his hand and kept pointing it at me in dramatic denunciation at the end of every period, but one of the others nudged him, as though to say this was not good form, whereupon he threw it down viciously at my feet. The speech may have been very impressive, but Abdi was away at the wells and I did not understand a word. So I held up my hand and said, “Shut up!” which the orator’s instinct seemed to interpret for him. At last Abdi returned, and I was able to have it out.

SPOKESMAN : “Our camels hunger and thirst, and two days of desert lie before us.”

I : “Well, whose fault is that? I wanted to get here last night.”

SPOKESMAN : “But here we are amid springs and pastures. Our camels cannot go forward unless they first fortify themselves. We pray you let us tarry here

awhile. Then we will go on to the place you name, even though we must travel all through the night."

I: "But why does this man palaver with me? The headman is responsible. Let us hear what he has to say."

The headman, who was standing at the edge of the semicircle, now said, "Sir, we know you are a big man, and he who sent us with you is also a big man."



A PALAVER OF CAMELMEN.  
(*Photograph by* CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.)

I: "All the more reason that you should obey my orders."

This seemed unanswerable, and there was a murmur as who should say I had scored, for the Somalis can appreciate a joke even against themselves.

I went on: "Why did you only start at five when I told you to start very early for this long march?"

HEADMAN: "Sir, it was very cold in the night."

I was about to protest when three shots were suddenly fired a yard behind me.

I looked round angrily to find three grinning Somalis drawn up to attention. They were the Abyssinian guard, who had just fired a salute into the air, and I was told that it was customary to give them a present. Having satisfied them with some game and rice and loincloths, I returned to my palaver. If I conceded a rest now, when would they be ready to start?

They replied: "At the same time as yesterday— 3 p.m. I suggested eleven, and finally we compromised for twelve. In the evening, and again next day, passive resistance resumed its sway. There were always excuses galore: the camels were tired and tried to lie down by the roadside, so the men had to camp too soon; or else the camels were tired or had strayed, and it was impossible to start early. I always obtained something by my protests, but, short of a fight, I never could have obtained all the speed I wanted.

However, it is always difficult to be really angry with so cheerful and good-humoured a rascal as a Somali. He is so delightfully simple too, even in his flattery. In discussing the next day's route I was always regarded as a kind of wizard, because I not only knew the names and distances, but even where there would be water, and what would be the state of the road. I would hear loud murmurs of astonishment. "Well, what is it?" I would say to Abdi.

"They say," he would reply, "how do you know? How can you know?"

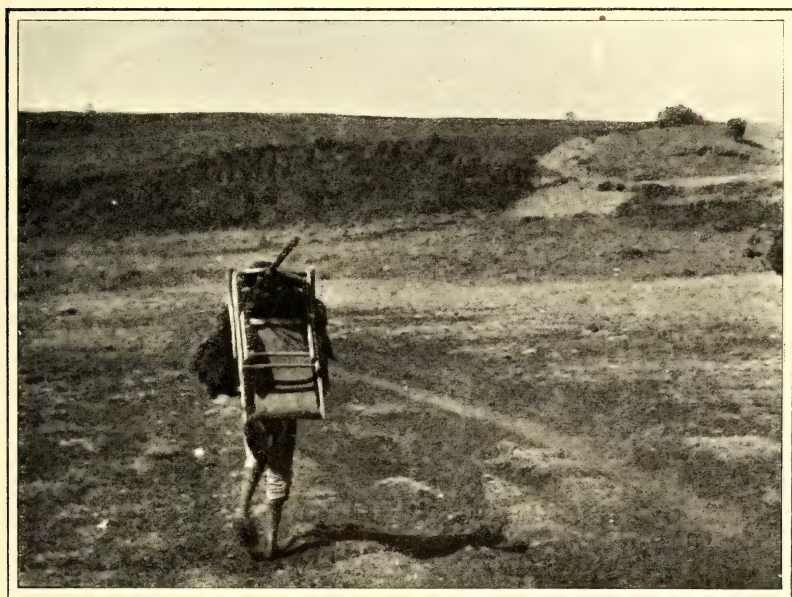


“ The Afrits told me.”

And a long ripple of “ W'Allah ” would go round the crowd.

Now to describe the sensations of a caravan journey so that every reader may experience them. This has never been done, perhaps never will be.

The keynote is monotony. You wake in the dark



THE DEPARTURE OF MY DECK-CHAIR.

and speed your departing camels while your night things are being packed and your breakfast is being prepared. Off they go in their long, slow, majestic file, followed at intervals by various stragglers carrying a chair, or a pail, or a sackful of odds and ends slung over their shoulders. The first of your personal servants to start is the cook. I can laugh still over

the recollection of Reggel on the march. Picture a man in a blue coat with a broad white band, a red and yellow striped kilt—above these a round, bald head with long, projecting ears, and below a pair of very spindly black shanks. Round his neck is a bit of rope from which he has suspended the big rusty key of his provision box, like a medallion. In one hand is an unlighted lantern, in the other a cumbrous basket, and it takes him all his time to drive my small flock of sheep: ridiculous beasts with white bodies and black heads, bloated bags at their throats and laughable stumpy tails where they store their surplus fat. Between five and six I announce that I am off. My syce holds the stirrup in true feudal fashion for me to mount my mule, other retainers shoulder my guns (if possible so that they may point straight at me), there is a last lingering look round to see if anything has been left behind, and the day's treadmill begins.

The delights of vagabondage have certainly been exaggerated. People who talk romantically about the freedom of the desert forget its limitations. They might just as well extol the freedom of a man in a small boat at sea—but how is he going to make use of it? The whole thing might be regarded as an amusing picnic by a congenial party, though the opportunities of quarrel would be enormous. If only to vary the monotony, an occasional row would be indispensable. Joseph certainly knew the conditions of this kind of travel, when he begged his brethren to see that they fell not out by the way. Of course there are compensations in travelling alone.

You have nobody's wishes or fancies to consider but your own, and it is good for you to have to rely on yourself. But after a week you feel as though you would like to scream aloud for companionship, you yearn for the sight of a white face, you would almost give away your tongue for a chat with an Englishman. When you have met a rare traveller, you are set up in good-humour for hours or days, even though he be only a Frenchman, or German, or Greek.

Oh! the monotony of the road between Zaila and Gildessa. On the map you see a fine string of names, and you anticipate that each represents a strange barbarous village, where you will be able to observe the antediluvian customs of an old-world race. Not a bit of it: saving one or two poor huts for the military posts, and these at long intervals, there is not a trace of human habitation all the way. At the best you meet an occasional shepherd or an occasional caravan. All the high-sounding names represent only so many wells or hills or other camping-places, sometimes even a mere solitary tree standing alone like a sentinel in the desert. So all day long you plod, plod, plod forward, now struggling and kicking and beating in the vain hope of making your mule go a jot faster than he chooses, now getting off and trudging it afoot, nor minding the cruel boulders if only you may cover the tedious ground a wee bit faster. You plod, plod, plod, all day with nothing to think of but the miles and minutes of your march; the same surroundings repeat themselves so pitilessly that you soon know them all by heart and abandon hope of discovering a new

aspect or a new sensation. It is indeed a pilgrim's progress, as dull and unconvincing as Bunyan's.

I have now been describing the instant impressions. When I reached Harrar, these were so strong upon me that I fervently hoped Menelik would refuse me permission to proceed any further ; and a great dread came over me with the reflection that I must go over all this intolerable country again before I could return to the coast. Yet now that I have returned I can look back upon the experience with indulgence, and even congratulate myself upon having gone through it. Apart from the incredible benefits to my health and strength, I find an interest in the sum total of incidents and impressions which, taken separately, bored me incredibly. Sometimes I almost fancy I should like to go again, and I never desist from recommending all my friends to set out. After all, the appreciation of desert travel is entirely a matter of temperament. Perhaps the chief drawback of the journey through Somaliland is that you may not inure yourself gradually. You must plunge at once into the hardest and dreariest tract of country, into blinding glare, choking dust, and stifling heat.

I had scarcely realised this kind of desert before. I imagined all deserts were great wastes of soft yellow sand, such as I had seen at Gabes and Tripoli. I had forgotten that, though deserts may be but the dry beds of exhausted oceans, a seashore is as likely to be covered with pebbles as with sand. In Somaliland the pebbles predominate and grow up into boulders, which are the rockery of a strange withered



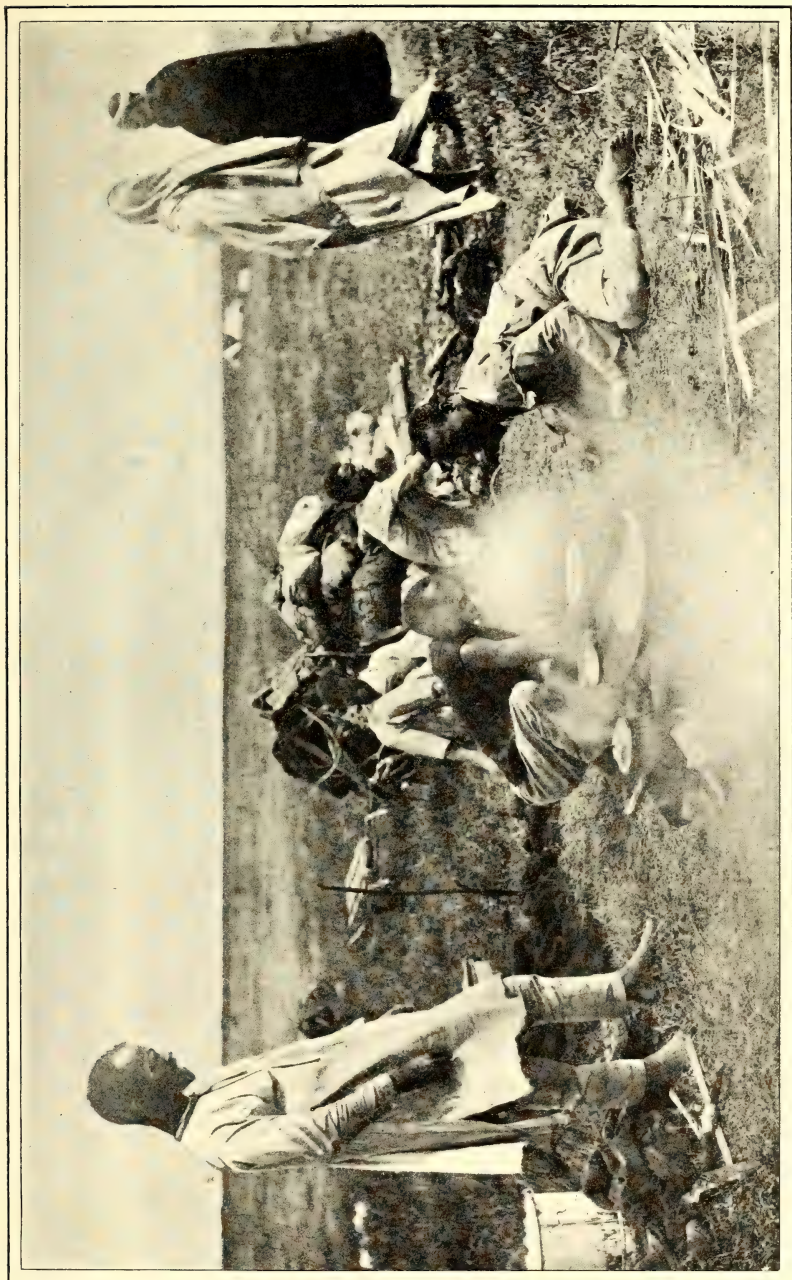
garden. There are parched aloes and shrivelled mimosas, all sorts of graceful shrubs, which on closer acquaintance prove so much crumbling matchwood. The arrangement is exquisite, surpassing even the horticulture of Hampton Court or Monte Carlo, but you are in a pleasure garden of the dead, which bears no close inspection. It is an ugly glutinous vegetation, all stunted, all parading its inhospitality by exaggerated armaments of huge thorns and clustering prickles. The white berries are like parched peas, and a rare tulip-tree of sorts bears big grey oranges, which contain nothing but woolly fibres, cobwebby gristles, a veritable Dead Sea fruit. The only redeeming feature is the intoxicating scent, recalling a quintessence of clover and heather, with which it loads the air. Without exaggeration, you come to reek of it in every rag and every pore as surely as you reek of other odours after travelling in a third-class smoker of the Underground. This incense of the desert and the greyness of the desert—these are my two liveliest recollections.

The greyness of the desert: you are in a sea of grey. The fierce sun beats down upon you from a blue-grey sky; as you pass, grey shrubs nod at you in apoplectic grimness, and livid grey lizards shiver away over the grey sand; grey jackals eye you suspiciously from behind huge grey ant-hills; grey bones and skulls strew the beaten track in every stage of decomposition. It is only when the bright moon rises and sheds sepulchral shadows on every hand, that all is transfigured with a haze of frosted silver. Between the



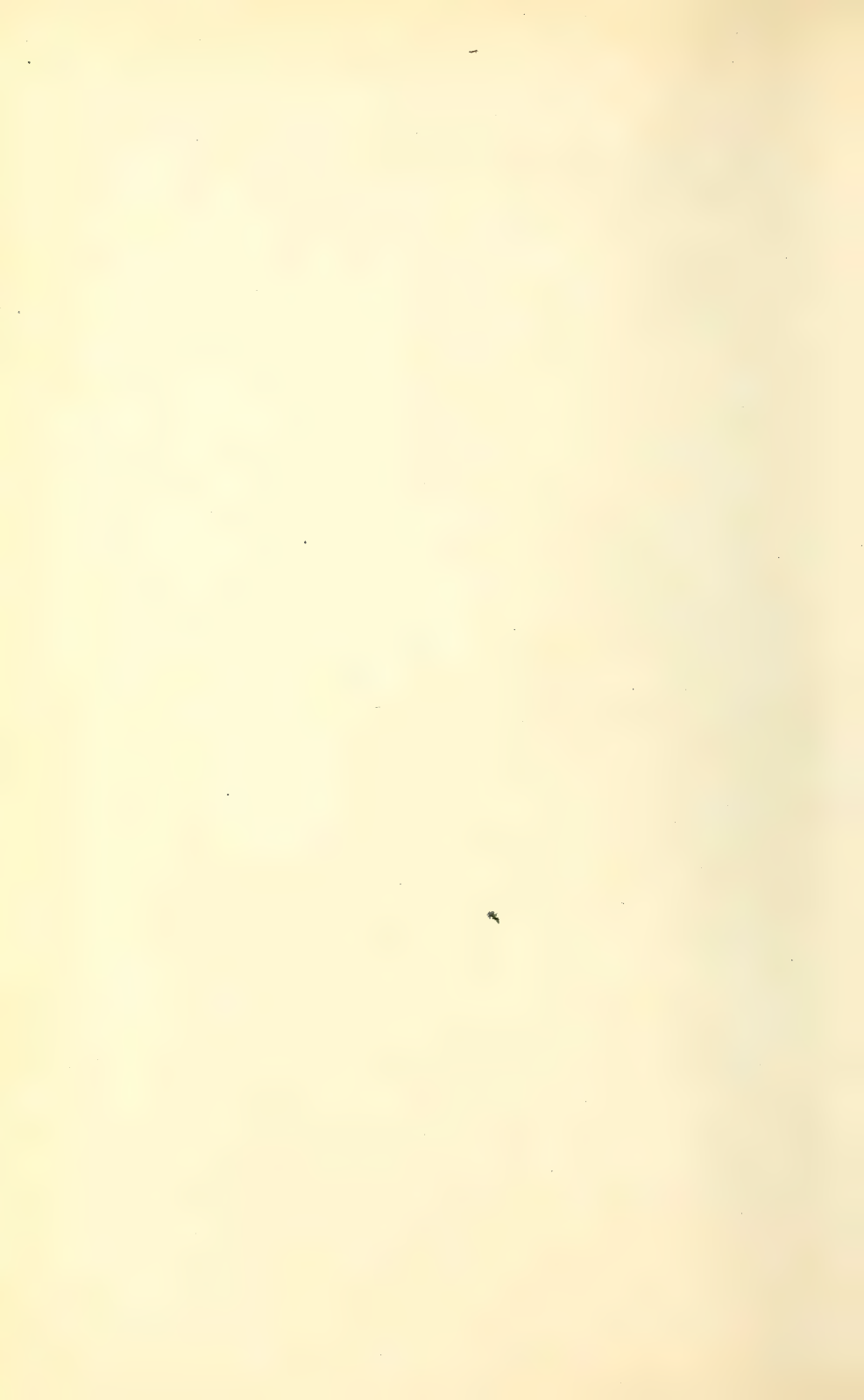
intervals of desert are stretches of semi-desert, where the boulders are not rendered more tolerable by the intrusion of hills, though a certain variety is imported by the fantastic outlines of purple ranges and brown mountains shaped like tents and tabernacles, or by the graceful pose of umbrella-shaped trees.

Such are your unvarying surroundings during nine or ten days, all the way to Gildessa. You plod along from cock-crow until the heat is unbearable, when you pitch your tent or seek the shelter of a tree. Your cook collects three stones, kindles a fire as though by magic, and soon prepares a tempting meal. You make up arrears of slumber until it is cool enough to set out after your camels for the evening camp. The afternoon march is the counterpart of the forenoon's, and you have again no other goal but food and sleep. Even at night you have no peace. The Somalis, who have run all day beside your mule, whose hours of rest have been taxed by ministrations to your comfort, never show signs of fatigue. Instead of curling themselves up in their blankets and securing every available moment for a hard-earned sleep, they now redouble the chatter and the raucous songs with which they have beguiled their run. Sometimes I wished that they could curb their spirits, but I had not the heart to check them, and I reflected that, though my slumbers might suffer, my sense of security was enhanced. The only nocturnal habit I drew the line at was a tent-boy coming to snore under the flap of my tent, an inch or so away from my nose. The culprit would behave just like a dog about it. I would

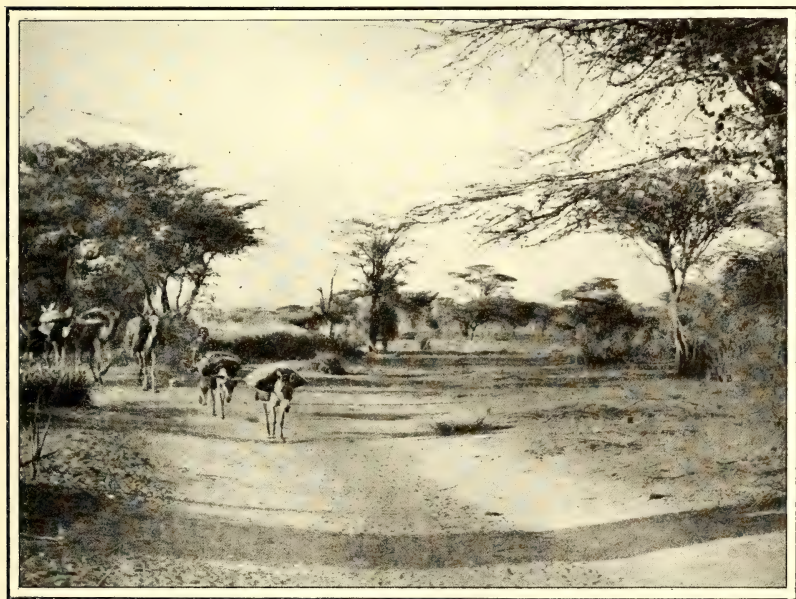


COOKING IN CAMP.  
(Photo by P. Mathieu.)

[To face page 88.



bang him with my hand through the canvas. He would wake up reluctantly, go away, and presently return to snore again. This would be repeated two or three times, my blows and remonstrances growing ever more vigorous. Then at last I would needs shout for Abdi, who seemed ever on the alert. "Wariya! Wariya!" and my tormentor would be hurried off,



APPROACHING GILDESSA.

leaving me to pass the rest of the night in peace, unless perchance a camel came lurching against the tent, or my mule took to stumbling among the ropes, or a sudden thunderstorm threatened to wash me away.

For nine days I had plodded wearily over grey deserts and rocky ravines, gnashing my teeth for



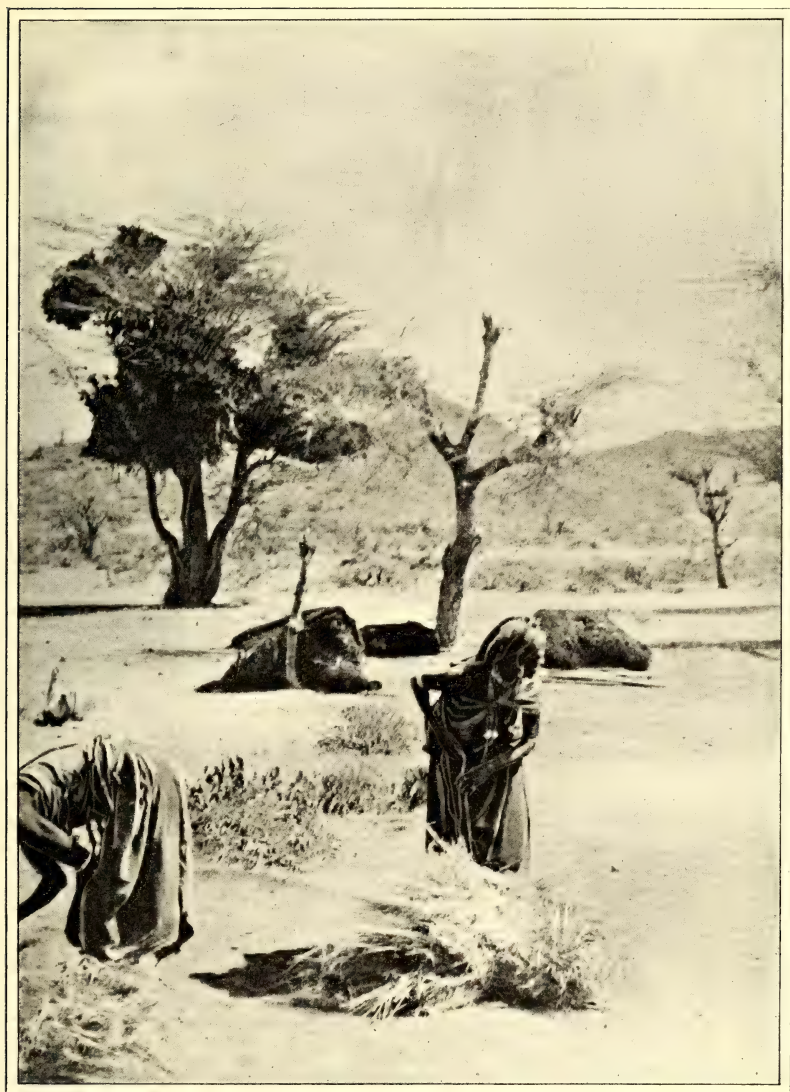
very loneliness, sometimes even breaking out into a tuneless chaunt to exercise my lungs. How my spirits rose as I approached the little township of Gildessa! Here at last were plenty of green trees, and a market, and unsophisticated peasants. I had accomplished one stage in my long journey; I should be rid of my tiresome camels and camelmén, in whose



THE TORRENT-BED OF GILDESSA

place others would convey me over the mountains to Harrar. The only drawback was that Gildessa possesses an evil reputation for fever, which some people declare is quite unwarranted. There are certainly no marshes or swamps, but the little town stands close to a broad, dry torrent-bed, where all sorts of garbage and refuse are offered for the delectation of





WOMEN SELLING FUEL AT GILDESSA.



the hyenas and vultures. I was accordingly advised to pitch my camp a couple of hundred yards away from the town under the grateful shade of the nullah. What, then, was my disgust on arriving, to find that my direct orders had been ignored by the camelmen, and that all my boxes had been dumped down at the edge of the torrent-bed. I remonstrated heartily and insisted that they should be removed at once. But the camels had all wandered off to graze, most of the camelmen had gone off to fraternise with their friends in the town, and the few who remained replied curtly that "every sah'b he camp here." So my own servants had to run about and collect the camels while I exercised my lungs and my legs and kept a watchful eye upon the numerous loafers who had congregated to gape at the white man. Most officious amongst them was a very old madman, who strutted about brandishing a huge scimitar, which he had drawn from a silver scabbard at his side. I had hardly crossed the torrent-bed, and was still in the midst of my altercation about the camping-place, when he advanced towards me, saluted pompously, and held out his hand. Imagining he was some official, I shook hands and inquired what he wanted. Abdi replied that the fellow was a mad beggar, but that travellers generally gave him something, as madmen are considered more or less saintly by Muhammadans. This is the kind of stuff which produces the various Mahdis, Mullahs, and other fanatics who stir up sedition in Africa. I remember a similar individual who used to strut about the

public square at Tangier and spit at every European or Jew who passed. The man with the scimitar was an incessant nuisance throughout the two days which I spent at Gildessa. Bribing him to go away only made him the more attentive, and when I threatened him with my stick, I was advised to beware of outraging public opinion by striking a



A STREET IN GILDESSA.

saint. In the midst of this annoyance I received a curt message that the Governor of Gildessa expected all travellers to come and report themselves at the custom-house. I replied that, if he wished to see me, he might pay me a visit at my camp. At last I got my way, my tents were pitched in a patch of delicious shade, and kindly peasants



arrived with offerings of milk and eggs. Duly refreshed, I strolled across to view the town.

It consists for the most part of round huts, like summer-houses, made of bamboo and wattling with thatched roofs. These are known as tukuls, and



ABYSSINIAN WOMEN SERVANTS POUNDING RED PEPPER.

(*Photograph by CAPTAIN HARRINGTON.*)

generally have some kind of courtyard outside with more or less of a palisade. Here women are at work, oftenest pounding pepper with a huge wooden pestle, nearly as tall as themselves, in a mortar shaped like a jack-boot. The process has the appearance of churning. The bazaar was thronged with loungers,



though there seemed extremely little to buy. A number of asses stood for sale or hire on the top of a hill, and others were congregated in a courtyard, which recalled the fonduk of Arab lands. Women crouched under umbrella-tents, presiding over basket-work pannikins of snuff, grain, chillies, or occasionally a few handfuls of gums. Nearly every woman wore several necklaces of glass beads, and the better-to-do had silver cartwheel earrings. The maidens wore their hair in mops, while the married women tied it up tightly in a black or blue-black cloth. The costume of men and women alike is restricted to a single white garment, a cotton sheet, or tobe, which is wound round the body. The men fold it round them so as to leave an end, which they fling dramatically over their shoulders like a Spaniard's cloak. The women fasten it more securely round their waists, leaving a loose end with which they can cover their shoulders and even their heads if they choose. I am speaking, of course, of Somalis, who constitute the large majority of the inhabitants. The Butchers' bazaar was similar to others in Somaliland, only simpler than that I had seen at the coast. An arrangement of clothes-lines formed a rude square, from which loathsome bits of cat's-meat dangled. Up on the top of a steep hill were three or four tukuls, where the Abyssinian authorities dominate the town. I could hear them tootling their bugles at all hours of the day, most loudly of all at sunrise and sunset.

After dinner I felt on extremely good terms with myself, and called gaily for a dance. As Abdi went

off to see what he could arrange, I said in chaff, "Don't bring the whole village." "No, sah'b, I no bring that," he laughed. But he had reckoned without Somali curiosity, and when the shades of night had fallen upon my encampment, I found that the majority of the inhabitants had come over the broad dry torrent-bed from the village. The dance was admirably staged. I was in a deep grove, and the full moon shone splendidly through the trees. I sat outside my tent smoking cigarettes and listening to the hyenas and jackals. Presently there was a hum of barbaric singing in the distance, towards the town of Gildessa. I strained my ears and eyes, until finally I made out a band of ghostly figures flitting forward through the grove, with gleaming spears and martial tramp. As they approached their chaunt seemed to lose its barbarism and put on an ecclesiastical effect. At last I could distinguish the words of the chorale: "Salaam Allah! Salaam Allah! Salaam Allah!" (The peace of God be upon thee!). What a prelude to an orgy!

A crowd of savages halted a hundred yards off, grounded their spears, and executed a few dance steps to the accompaniment of singing and clapping of hands. Then they advanced a little, halted again, advanced, halted, and finally entered the swept space, which my servants had prepared for the show. "Salaam Allah! Salaam Allah! Salaam Allah!"—the welcome grew deafening.

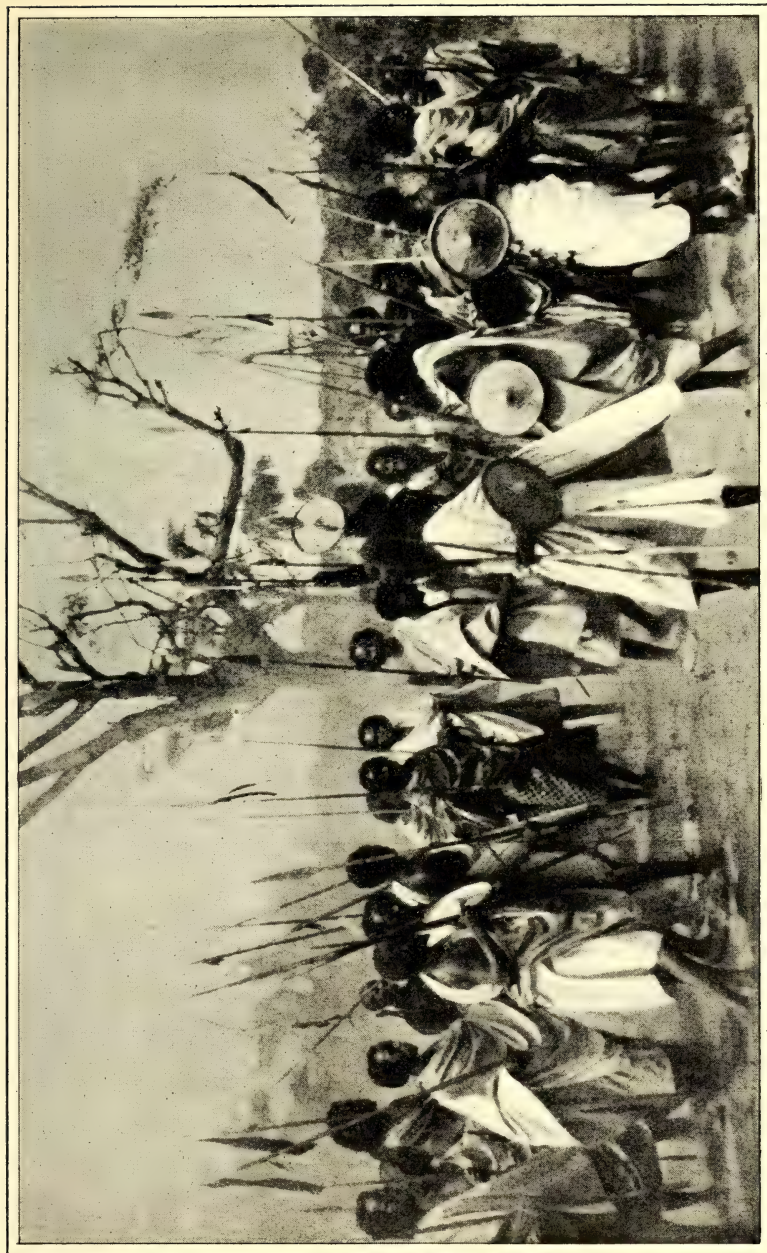
"Where are the women?" I asked grumpily.

"They come later."

Meanwhile the men certainly exhibited great vigour. Their step began with a kind of crouch ; they beat the earth with their bare feet so that you might imagine hundreds of flails at work, and great clouds of dust arose as they proceeded to pirouette round one another. Their long spears fringed the skyline, ever and anon ball-cartridges would be fired into the air. "Salaam Allah! Salaam Allah! Salaam Allah!"—would they never desist from their stormy greeting?

This was only the prelude. The first turn was a cutlass and shield dance. The crowd resolved itself into a restless chorus, while two men advanced into the centre. They seemed in grim, deadly earnest, one seeking to stab the other with his gleaming steel, the other defending himself desperately with his small Somali shield. It was a wonderful exhibition of dexterity, and none would have believed the dancers could be merely at play. Their eyes were aflame with malice ; surely the lust of slaughter was upon them, yet the man with the cutlass never succeeded in striking anything but the centre of the shield. He pursued, he retreated, he slashed at his foe's head, chest, arms, at every vulnerable point, and every instant I expected to espy a deep red gash. The man with the shield seemed to bear a charmed life. At last the defence began to wane, the shield was plied with less vigour, the defender sank upon one knee, he crouched, he grovelled, he pressed his fingers to his lips, he trembled like an aspen and craved aloud for mercy. Never had I heard such sounds of abject fear. The other made his scimitar whistle through the air,





"SALAAM ALLAH!"

*Photograph by CAPTAIN HARRINGTON.*





pinned the wretch down to the earth with his left hand, and prepared with a grim grin to slit his weasand. The victim wriggled on his belly towards me and made signs of imploring intercession. I raised my thumb like a Roman Emperor at a gladiatorial game, and the victor gave up his victory at once. "Salaam Allah! Salaam Allah!"

The next scene was a perfect pandemonium. It began with a hissing, whistling sound from everybody's throat to imitate the noise of weapons in the air. Then everybody began to rush at everybody else. Clouds of choking dust thickened the air, and the turmoil drew every instant nearer and nearer to me. Steel was swishing over my head, a few inches only over my head, in the moonlight, and masses of brown, surging humanity, stinking with perspiration, were claspng my feet to implore protection against their sham enemies. I had to retire hastily and wash my mouth with whiskey and soda.

In any case, there was none of the monotony usually ascribed to savage dances. Indeed the next turn was very far from monotonous. A man was muffled up in a big white burnus so that only his eyes, nose, and the lower part of his legs appeared. He jumped up and down in a would-be effeminate manner and whinnied to simulate shyness. Two men (one of whom was my Arab soldier) placed themselves on either side, their faces glittering with amorous desires. They beat their breasts and murmured "Ahhh!" to denote their passion. Gradually they sidled up nearer and nearer. But the rest is better left imagined than

described. Fortunately for the performers there is no County Council at Gildessa.

Just as the rude merriment was subsiding, I heard a sound on my left like the gallop of cavalry. When I had overcome my surprise, I reflected that perhaps it was only a regiment of infantry marking time. I strained my eyes and perceived that the noise was caused by some dozen young Somali braves, who were gathered in a semicircle and stamped in unison as though they would beat open the earth. Their hair projected in thick, wig-like mats, and some of them—those, I learned, who had slain many men—wore feathery tufts on the top of their heads. They waved longer spears than the crowd, they shouted louder, altogether there was far more vigour about their dancing. They closed in, forming a circle, facing inwards, stamping, shouting, brandishing their spears and shields—a glorified football scrimmage. First each seemed to be for forcing his way in at all hazards, then came a curious gazelle-like bound backwards as if for a fresh charge into the scrimmage. This was the most barbaric part of the performance, and the barbarism was heightened by the reflection of what those hair-tufts meant.

But the dances were being resumed. There were Catherine-wheels, the men dancing with their hands as well as with their feet : some very gracefully, others like boys on the way to the Derby. There were animal dances, accompanied by strange animal noises, a camelman in a brown jerkin being especially expert.

Now I was told that the women had arrived, and

I saw a score or so huddling together in the distance. The ground was cleared for them, but they refused to come nearer than twenty yards, for Abdi said, "They 'shamed to dance before big mister." After all, this was no great loss, for their timidity prevented them from doing much more than clap their hands and drone a refrain. Two or three men danced towards them in a goat-like way. To and fro they danced for nearly half an hour, chaunting loudly, defiantly, but the women still kept closely huddled, and did nothing more than clap and drone mechanically. Eventually one or two were prevailed upon to come forward a very little, and a set was formed. Two men and two women danced slowly in a circle, then more quickly towards the centre, then round and round again. It was very long and very tedious; the same monotonous refrain was repeated incessantly, and I was told it was all in praise of the "big mister."

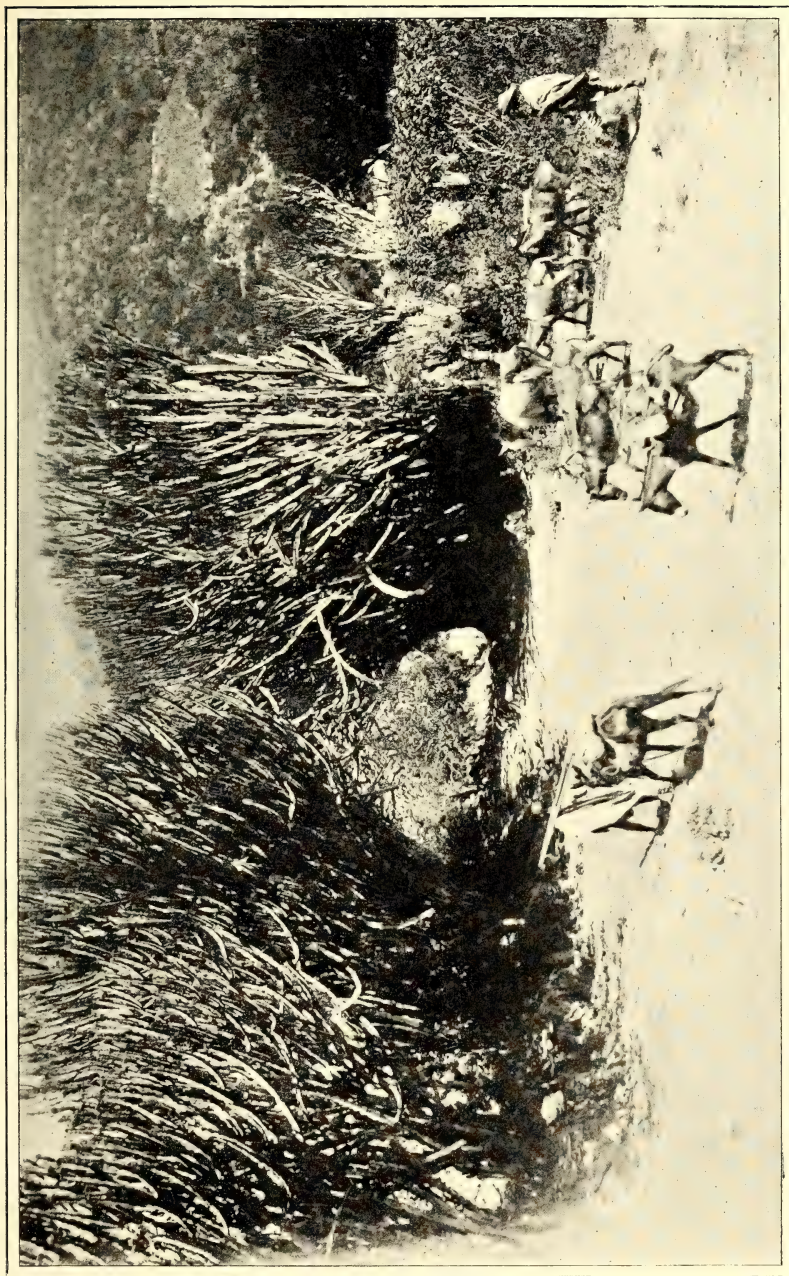
When I could endure it no longer, I gave the signal for an end, and all retreated into groups according to sex and age and tribe. Within a few minutes the whole hubbub was stilled, and all the revellers were squatting silently in the moonlight, waiting to be paid. A thick cloud of choking dust alone bore evidence of the recent revel. Abdi had promised that the whole village should not be allowed to come, but there must have been at least six hundred persons there waiting to be paid. Abdi suggested a payment to each group, and gallantly insisted upon my giving a double quota to the group of women, who had done so much less than the others. "They very

much 'shamed, 'sah'b," he reminded me, but I could discern no reason for their shame. As each group was paid it strolled off towards the town, without a word of farewell, affording a contrast to all the salaams, gun-firings, and even handshakes which had accompanied their advent. By the laws of Gildessa every light must be out and every citizen abed by ten, but the laws had evidently been relaxed in my honour, for it was now close on midnight.

Next night I camped at Balawa, the last stage before Harrar; and after my dinner the whole village turned out as a matter of course. I was for sending the folk away, imagining that their performance would be but a poor repetition of the dance at Gildessa. However they persisted, and I was rewarded for my patience by quite a different and interesting spectacle. When it began I thought it was going to be the old business over again. The usual semicircle was formed for the usual dance by two men, who stamped the ground with legs of iron, and brandished cutlasses as if about to cut throats instantly. Then a couple of small boys went through the same evolutions and acquitted themselves by no means badly, though their tendency was to exaggerate everything. I was for retiring, when the word arrived that the women were about to perform. I remembered the women of Gildessa and was not hopeful, but I waited awhile from courtesy.

Mats were spread out, and some four or five women came forward and knelt in a row. They knelt bolt upright and waited. Several minutes





CANDELABRA CACTUS AT BALAWA.

(Photo by P. Mathieu.)



elapsed in silence. Then a number of men came and knelt down, one opposite each woman. Soon the men began to growl and bark like beasts. Gradually the noise grew louder and wilder, the men knelt up and drew closer and closer to the women, yet never came into actual contact. The men swayed their heads and bodies all the while right and left, up and down, and gradually their sharp barks took shape in a long, crooning, rumbling growl, in which declarations of love could presently be distinguished. It was really a horrible sight, and there was a feeling of frenzy in the air. All this growling and swaying had evidently induced a hypnotic state, as they do in the howling dervishes at Constantinople. Their eyes glistened and seemed ready to start out of their heads, all their muscles twitched and shivered with excitement, their hands and lips came within a hair's breadth of those of the women, yet never actually touched. The men began to show signs of exhaustion and sank back upon their heels ever more frequently, till at last they slunk away defeated, giving place to other men, who had also to retire discomfited after awhile.

And all the time the women remained kneeling bolt upright, silent and sphinx-like, merely wagging their heads, first down, then right, then left, then up, and so on apparently for ever. Their long mats of hair followed the motions comet-like in the air, and their big silver bracelets afforded a sort of castanet accompaniment. Save for an occasional

shiver and something of a hypnotic stare in their large, glistening eyes, they never betrayed a vestige of emotion. Nor did they ever show a trace of fatigue. Men after men gave way and retired, but they remained bolt upright, wagging their heads without a second's intermission, mutely challenging more men to come and kneel before them. I am told that sometimes they will go on like this all night—from six or seven in the evening until dawn—and never tire; nay, that if there were enough men to last out, they would remain kneeling and nodding until they were turned into stone.

This possesses a real interest apart from the mere mystery of the barbaric scene, for it must be a survival of some old Pagan love-rite. Perhaps the strangest part of the symbolism is the fact that the women always come out victors in the strife, and this in a country where women are held in such light esteem.



## Chapter V

### ENTERING ABYSSINIA

Approaching Harrar—An Ancient and Mysterious Town—Rocky Streets—The Harrari—The Lion Hotel—Wild Scavengers—Bazaars—A Paradise for Small Incomes—A Health Resort—Farming—Openings for Labour—Mining—Imperial Attentions—Delays at Harrar—Lake Aramaya—Forests—A Telephone Station—Hawash River—An Alarm in the Desert—Shoa—A Fairy Ride—Sad Somalis.

A VERY few days after leaving the Somali coast, a red and white flag over a guard-house informed me that I was in the territory of the Negus. But many long marches had to be passed through Somalis and Gallas and other Muhammadan blacks before I could persuade myself that I had reached Abyssinia. It was very much as though I had set out from the Welsh coast to join Prince Charlie at Derby, and found myself always in a land which belonged to England but yet was not England.

If a village seemed a marvel at Gildessa, how incredible it was to reflect that at length I drew near to a town—the only town indeed which I should see during my thousand-mile journey, the only real town, Menelik imout!<sup>1</sup> to be found within His Majesty's dominions.

<sup>1</sup> By the death of Menelik!—I really must begin to swear in Abyssinian.

By rights this town should still belong to Egypt, and therefore be administered by Britain, but our ministers cannot be expected to reflect upon more than one subject at once, and other nations, who are less absent-minded, profit accordingly. So now Harrar is administered by Abyssinia.

Up precipitous torrent-beds, along the sides of wild valleys I pushed forward in my frenzy for a



AN ABYSSINIAN GUARDHOUSE.

(*Photograph by CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.*)

town. After what I had passed through it was already something to behold human habitations of the summer-house pattern, woods, grass, flowers no longer desiccated, fields under cultivation, and—wonder of wonders!—the ripple of running water. A tuft of maiden-hair fern seemed the first-fruit of a Promised Land. It began to grow cool upon the mountains of Gildessa. Heigho! the relief.

But the last stage, like the last straw, was the east endurable. The track grew ever rougher. It was impossible to ride. Walking became painful. There seemed a greater solitude among the trees than in the boundless plain, where solitude is more at home. And the surroundings were uncanny. There were horrible-looking cacti, such as one



APPROACHING HARRAR.

meets in nightmares, and I could fancy they were huge snake-trees or vegetable devil-fish. At a tight corner, one of these had fallen down and I had to creep beneath its tentacles, expecting every moment that it would seize and suck me in. Huge rats scurried away to their crannies. I came upon a mule, long dead, filling up the middle of the road and stinking.

At last, after much deferred hope, I strained my eyes from a height and espied a white building upon a broad brown hill, yes, and a tall white minaret hard by.

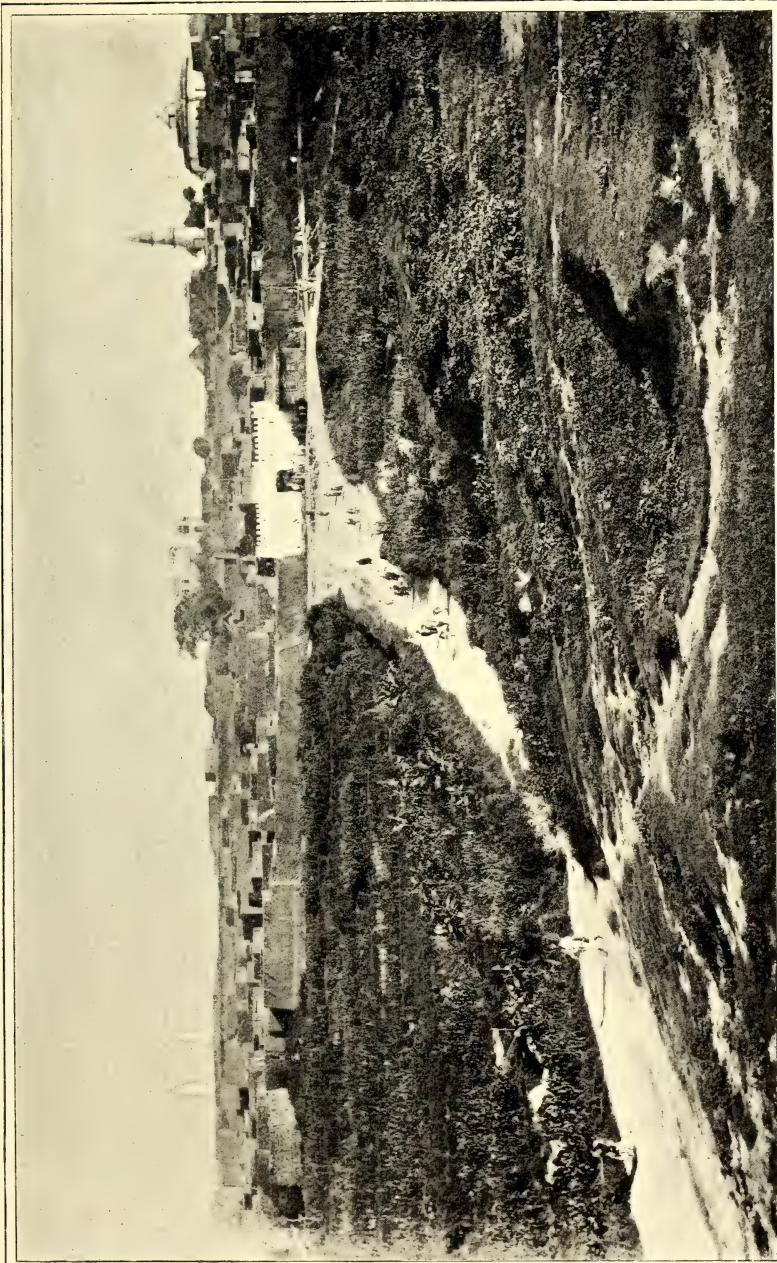
"There is Harrar," said Abdi.

"Where?"

"Straight where you stare. There. *There.*"

I stared bravely for some seconds, but saw only the white building and the minaret upon the brown hill. Perhaps the surface of the hill was somewhat strange. No, that could not be the town of Harrar, unless the Harrari dwelt in ant-hills. Not ant-hills, perhaps, but very like ant-hills are these khaki edifices, which only the expert eye can distinguish from the brown hill whereon they rest. Like the ramifications of an ant-hill or a rabbit-warren are those serried walls and mazy streets and sunbaked buildings which are your first impression of this ancient and mysterious capital. Tempted to dwell too much upon the tedium of my journey hither, I must remember that, less than fifty years ago, a Christian might only enter Harrar with his life in his hand. At least Burton, who was often tempted to magnify his exploits, tells us so. The walls appear of great strength, and the turreted gateway (one of five) may only be approached by a sharp ascent, which affronts my mule even after all he has gone through. I expect to be challenged by the tattered Abyssinian police, who are lounging outside a guard-house, but they content themselves with eyeing me in suspicious silence, and I pass in. I find myself amid a miniature





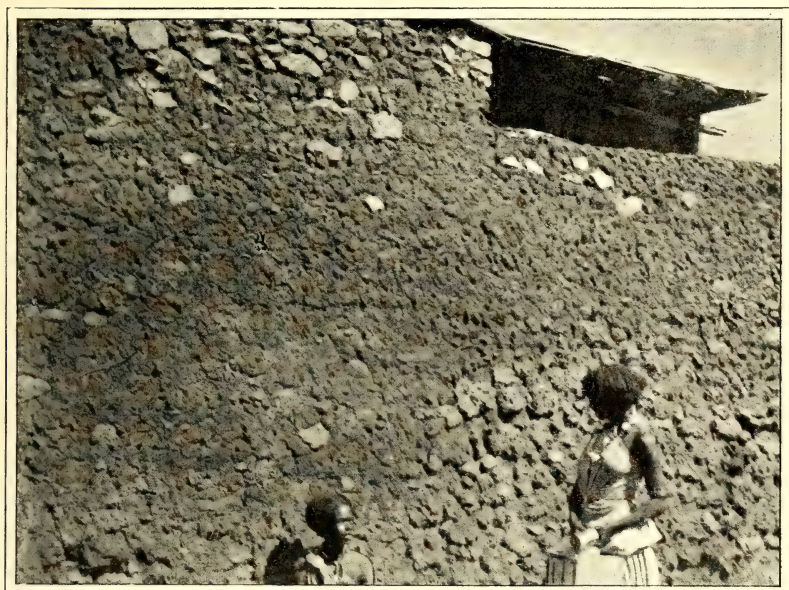
HARRAR.  
(Photo by P. Mathieu.)

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market, and my retainers must force a way for my mule through a throng of listless peasants, who are there to sell the produce of the countryside. I scramble up a pathway which suggests the side of a ruined wall, and then the narrow streets of the human warren begin.

The roads of Somaliland were bad enough, but



A STREET IN HARRAR.

the streets of Harrar are even worse. Once upon a time, in the dark ages, they must have been paved. Now the only remains of pavement are jagged white rocks and deep ruts or hollows, which act as pitfalls for any creature less agile than a goat. My friend, the British Consular Agent, when he takes me out to see the sights, is never tired of

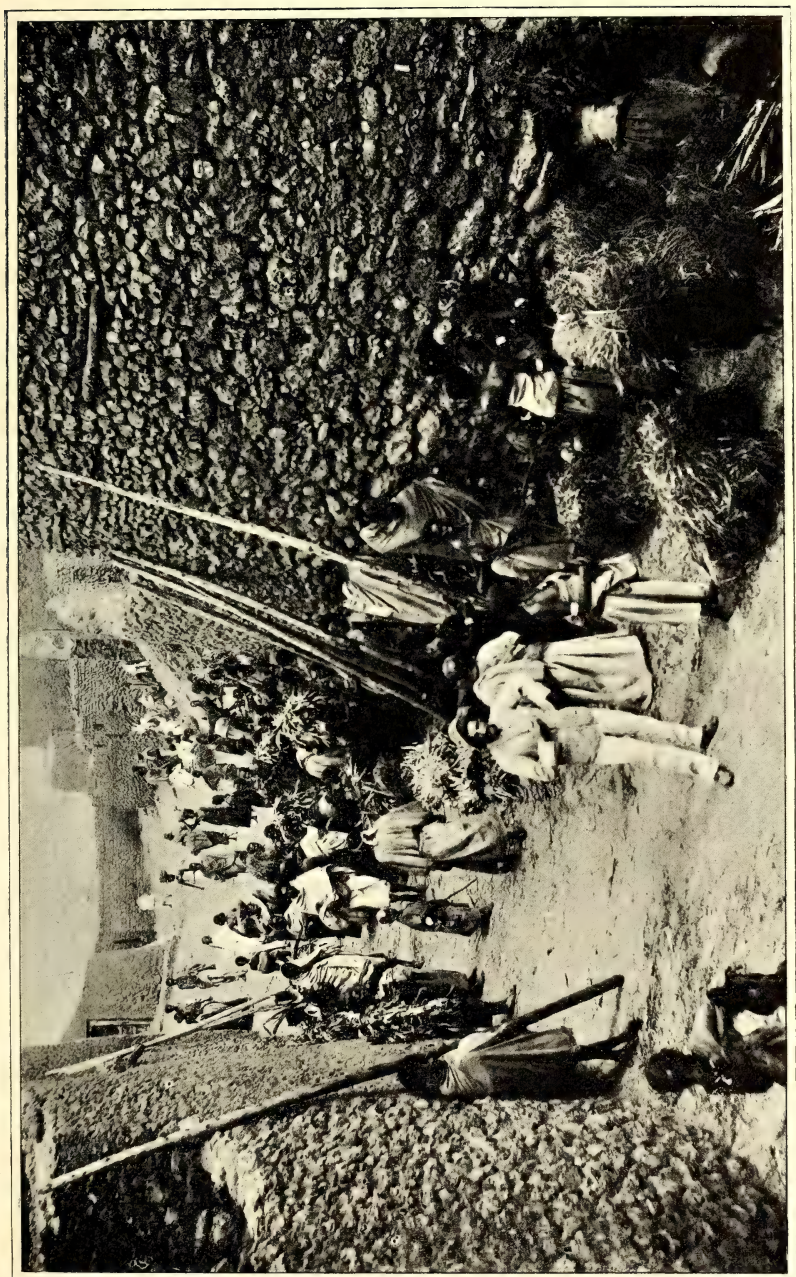


jesting over these incomparable streets. "Here," says he, pointing to a precipitous torrent-bed, where we must leap gingerly from boulder to boulder,—“here is Northumberland Avenue; there,” he goes on, scrambling into a muck-heap to avoid a flock of tiny white donkeys,—“there is New Bond Street.” It is fortunate that there are no wheeled conveyances in Harrar, for they would fare ill.

The word Abyssinian means mongrel, but that epithet would apply far more appropriately to the people of Harrar. Here Somalis, Gallas, Arabs, Egyptians, Danakils—the Lord only knows how many other folk—dwell together and intermarry. Themselves have long abandoned the attempt to distinguish, and know each other impartially as Har-rari. They have even evolved a distinct language of their own, which no other townsmen have ever done before or since. The only recognised difference is between these Moslems and the Christian Abyssinians, who are alien conquerors and officials rather than inhabitants. Even the Moslems, however, have acquired here something of the Abyssinian contempt for the *ferenji* (Frank, or European). No one steps out of your way unless you raise your stick, which is not always wise. Men walk straight at you with huge sacks on their heads and women stagger forward beneath immense sheaves of fuel, brushing both walls at once.

Somewhat short of breath and temper, I reached the chief square, which is flanked on one side by the





WOMEN SELLING FUEL IN A STREET OF HARRAR.

(Photo by P. Mathieu)

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round Abyssinian Cathedral, on the other side by Ras (Prince) Makonnen's palace, whose high gateway is adorned with a fringe of elephants' tails. Here was a posse of ragged warriors, whose chief occupation seems to consist in climbing the wall and blowing bugles—evidently a favourite instrument with



ENTRANCE TO RAS MAKONNEN'S PALACE, HARRAR.

*(Photograph by CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.)*

the Abyssinian. After wrangles with the Customs and Garasmach Banti, the Acting Governor, I made my way to the French hotel, and suddenly emerged upon something very like civilisation. A number of Europeans were congregated round a billiard-table with absinthe at their elbows, and the landlord asked me casually when I should like my shower-bath.



The entrance was through a long, low shop, by no means badly stocked, and some steps led me down to a courtyard and the queerest bedroom I ever slept in. It suggested a temple of the Pharaohs, and was, I learned, of Egyptian construction. On entering by an enormous wooden door I was confronted by a projecting stoup as though for holy water. A recess for my bed was surrounded by alcoves in the plastered



THE GATE WITH THE ELEPHANTS' TAILS.

wall, like tombs of the Ptolemies. To the right of this was a bamboo screen with a raised platform for a trellis bed, which faced a dark cave, where rats disported themselves by night. To the left was an earthen whitewashed screen and a wooden shutter, as of a harem window. This concealed the welcome shower-bath and led to another cave furnished with a mud divan all round its walls. There were holes



in the porous floor for emptying slops, and zebra-skins took the place of carpets. After the desert this was almost luxury. The joy of sleeping again on a real bedstead and the strange noises of the night made me dream I was in another planet. Ever and anon the long chaunt of the watchmen broke the stillness of the night mysteriously without—something between the horror of a female singing scales and the music of the muezzin. Guns kept going off. Hyenas howled so near that I was moved to barricade my cumbrous door.

All the scavenging of Harrar is done by kindly hyenas and accommodating jackals. There are holes in the town walls for them to creep in after dusk and disappear at dawn. As in France the householder places his refuse in a pile outside his door and the municipal cart comes round before breakfast to clear it off, so here he deposits it and counts upon the services of wild beasts. I have even heard them howling in the courtyard of the inn. The landlord's nephew told me how he was walking home one night when suddenly two hyenas dashed along the street (Northumberland Avenue or New Bond Street, I forget which) pursued by a crowd of dogs. Hyenas are too cowardly to attack a man in cold blood, but their jaws are almost as formidable as those of tigers, and he might have received a bad bite as they passed. So he shot over a wall like a flash of lightning, and had all the difficulty in the world to satisfy the Moslem family he had so unceremoniously disturbed. I have always held that no drainage is

safer than bad drainage, but the Harrari system does not stand the test of epidemics. Once started, they soon assume dangerous proportions. The last time cholera visited Harrar the men died like flies, and the women only escaped starvation by eating their own children.

The streets of Harrar are not inviting by night, and I think I only frequented them once when I was returning from an Abyssinian wedding. You are confronted by intense loneliness and a darkness which may be felt. Any native who ventures forth is promptly arrested, unless he be in attendance on an European or an official. You must have men ahead and men behind to hold out lanterns and warn you of boulders and pitfalls or prevent your stepping upon a growling pariah dog.

In Harrar there is little to see, but much to observe. The place is full of contrasts. Menelik's telephone wire stands out against a minaret or a mud cabin; you step out from *table d'hôte* to encounter a three-legged race, which turns out to be merely a prisoner manacled to his gaoler; in the principal square you are sickened with the smell of ordure; you step into the bazaar, and every shop is provided with a little bowl of incense which wafts a subtle fragrance on the foetid air.

Never shall I forget the impression made upon me by the meat market there. Instead of hanging their scraggy bits of cat's-meat on clothes-lines, as the Somalis do, the natives exposed them in large ill-hacked joints on long wooden tables saturated with

the blood and filth of generations. The stench was something indescribable, and the hustling, eager customers suggested a pack of hounds invading a knacker's yard. As for the bazaars, their contents are rather useful than ornamental. I had hoped to bring back many strange characteristic things in common use among the people, but on the whole I was considerably disappointed. I gathered together a small collection of the jewellery of the Somali and Abyssinian peasants. Mr. Theodore Bent asserted in his "Sacred City of the Ethiopians" that these were of Greek origin, but I am convinced that the patterns are either derived from India or else adapted by Indian artificers from some aboriginal design. Filigree work predominates, and the only difference between the two is that the Somali is heavier and more barbaric. I have secured great necklaces of silver beads, provided for both nations, with a hollow cylinder of silver in front, destined to contain an amulet. The bracelets are kept together by sturdy screws, the earrings are enormous and fitted with a beard of silver tongues such as might serve in very small bells. It is only necessary to look at my collection in order to feel certain that all the jewellery must have had a common origin. Another argument on behalf of India is that both Somalis and Abyssinians wear a great many ornaments which admittedly come from India, the most obvious being snake-like coloured glass bangles, which may be bought anywhere in Aden for an anna or two.

The essentially Abyssinian ornaments are very few. Chief amongst them are a silver or silver-gilt ring, a cross, and an ear-pick, which three are almost invariably worn upon a blue string round the neck. They must have some symbolical meaning, but what it is in the case of the ear-pick I have tried in vain to discover. What connection it can have with a cross and a ring is a puzzle. The blue cord, called *mateb*, is worn universally as a badge of Christianity, and is more readily recognised than even a cross. Native crosses with all sorts of strange and venerable designs are to be found, but it is difficult to induce their owners to part with them. The only one I have secured is silver gilt, and has upon it a pattern of the tree of life, which experts assure me is of Celtic origin, though how it could be so I am utterly at a loss to say.

I have also some curious horn and wicker goblets, some wooden neck pillows, which the women affect so that their greasy headdress may not be disturbed; a peculiar hairpin of gilt filigree pattern, worn over the ear; an Abyssinian lyre, very like the old Roman instrument and similar to that always played by King David in an Abyssinian picture, and a violin with a drum sounding-board and an absurd bow, such as might be used by a child for projecting toy arrows. This also appears in the pictures as supplying the traditional music for the death of the Virgin Mary. What pleases me perhaps most to exhibit is a quiver full of poisoned arrows, from the Ogaden country, as people who take them out and play with them are



always desperately afraid of impregnating themselves with poison. This poison, however, is probably not so dangerous as most people imagine, for Count Leontieff's doctor told me that when one of their party was hit by a poisoned arrow the wound rapidly yielded to the ordinary treatment for snake-bites.

Abyssinia is no place for fortune-hunters, but I am inclined to agree with certain residents, who represent Harrar as an ideal residence for sportsmen with small, regular incomes. You might build yourself a country house of sorts, keep fifteen servants and half a dozen horses, and spend all your time riding or shooting on less than £600 a year. As for food, you would shoot a great deal of it, but you may also buy a very fine sheep for 7s. 6d. to 9s. 6d., an enormous ox for less than £4, a plump chicken for a shilling, and so on in proportion. The only expensive things are the imported ones, and you would have to reduce your need of them to a minimum. You would soon be able to grow fruit and vegetables, which are now practically non-existent, and call other luxuries into being. And your wardrobe would not weigh down your exchequer. Harrar is not critical about fashions, and a score of khaki suits at a pound or so each would last you a lifetime. The chief drawbacks would be the loneliness and the difficulty of getting away: that endless journey to the coast every time you wanted to go home. There is of course the prospect of the railway from Jibuti, but if by any remote chance it ever does come to anything, many of Harrar's advantages will disappear with the drawbacks. Quidnuncs and globe-trotters

will come, native simplicity will vanish, prices will rise, even game laws may be called into existence.

For a delicate man a sojourn at Harrar might spell salvation. I have already alluded to the astounding robustness with which my journey has endowed me. And that is after enduring a variety of extremes, being parched one week and drenched the next, alternately gasping and shivering, sleeping in fever-swamps and witnessing a drop of  $40^{\circ}$  of the thermometer at sunset. Harrar, however, supplies the golden mean. For the whole year the extremes of temperature are  $63^{\circ}$  and  $82^{\circ}$ ; during eight months the variation rarely exceeds  $71^{\circ}$  and  $75^{\circ}$ . The town is some 6,000 feet above the level of the sea, and the air will give that of many Alpine health resorts points. For any lung complaint it is a sovereign remedy, and asthma is conjured as though by magic. The rainy season lasts for three or four months. It is inaugurated by several days of Scots mist; then come heavy storms, lasting for two hours at most out of the twenty-four, and generally considerate enough to choose the night-time for their visits. However, I am perfectly willing to lay a thousand to three that no one will choose Harrar as a health resort, though I extol temperature, air, and storms never so wisely. Pockets nowadays take precedence of lungs.

But I am considering that amphibious creature, the individual with a moderate income, that 'tweeny man who rules the modern roast. Happy thought: he shall farm!

Practically nothing of the sort has yet been





BREAKING UP SODS TO MAKE WALLS.  
(Photo by P. Mathieu.)

[To face page 121.]



attempted in the neighbourhood. Wheat is scarcely sown at all. Even Indian corn is but sparingly produced, though every attempt has afforded crops of amazing luxuriance. The lazy, careless native contents himself for the most part with growing durra, a weedy corn which almost sows and reaps itself, and, in a good year, may be relied upon for two crops. His notions of agriculture are primitive in the extreme. His spade consists of a sharp-pointed stick with a kind of mushroom handle. He plunges it lazily sideways into the ground and twists it slowly round and round, with the result that he does little more than scrape the surface. He has a poor sort of plough, but does not trouble to eradicate the stubble; it is so much simpler to set light to it and risk a forest fire hard by. Anything so arduous as coffee-planting is left to the care of the Gallas, who remain more or less in the position of serfs. The coffee is exported as Moka, and a Frenchman defended this to me on the score that the plants had originally come from Yemen. The trade, of course, knows the difference, calling Abyssinian coffee "long-berry," and Arabian "short-berry Moka." The odd thing is that in Arabia no trouble is taken to irrigate, while in Abyssinia there is much irrigation and an inferior result.

There need be no limit to the produce which might be extorted from so much virgin soil. Similarly a little science would soon transfigure the native cattle. The sheep possess an unrivalled capacity for fattening, their tails readily putting on several pounds

of fat and leaving the bodies to put on the most exquisite lean. Indeed it might be worth while to experiment with this breed in England—this considerate breed which relegates all its fat to the tail. Similarly the oxen are merely sent out to pasture and left to take their chance, whereas, if properly fed, they would yield good and abundant meat. The cows again give very little milk merely from lack of nutriment. Money, too, might be made out of breeding donkeys. In Abyssinia they are larger than in Egypt, and no less intelligent. Indeed, all the domestic animals are far more human than they would be in Europe, probably because, like the Irish pig, they share the hovels of their masters. And a gastronomic missionary might introduce veal. At present your over-canny Abyssinian will not slay a beast before it is full grown.

Now for the drawbacks. Land is not for sale. It may be leased, but only with difficulty and at an undue rent. An Abyssinian prefers to make nothing out of his property rather than to alienate it to a foreigner. If ever the country is to be developed (always a doubtful advantage for a country), there must be some drastic modification of the land tenure. And cattle suffer much from epizootic disease. The natives have a remedy, which is said to yield excellent results. Here is the prescription. Collect the urine of a beast that is seriously sick. Allow it to putrefy, mix it with milk, and offer it to the healthy. They ail for a while but recover, and are then proof against infection. No one knows who devised this pro-

phylactic. It is doubtless mere peasant's empiricism, but it has proved so successful that it deserves the notice of the faculty. If the subject were properly studied and the right degree of putrefaction were ascertained there might be results useful to the world at large. The Emperor Menelik, who takes a perennial interest in the welfare of his subjects, has commissioned a French doctor, with the German name of Wurst, to investigate the question. The friends of cattle must look out for the results of his researches.

If I recommended any one to go and settle at Harrar, it would be the small man, the labourer or mechanic, who finds it hard to make both ends meet at home. I talked to a young French carpenter who has set up there and finds more employment than he can cope with. Having no competitors, he can charge what he pleases, and must be putting by a pretty penny. If any one chose to go out and make bricks or pottery or plaster or cement or glass, he would find an equally open field. I believe there is not a pane of glass in the whole town, though the European residents would be very glad to get it. Yet there is plenty of sand, which would make the manufacture possible, and the soil is admirably adapted for making pottery and even porcelain. The only idea of the natives is to model great amphoras, capable of holding 30 to 35 litres, with their hands, and bury them in great heaps of durra-stalk and weeds, which they burn for a day or two. They are quite ignorant of the use of the wheel.

Mining prospectors might also come and look round. So far no serious investigation has been made, though I am given to understand that copper and iron certainly exist. As to coal, nobody knows. But the man who discovered it ought to make his fortune, for combustibles are at famine prices. The Abyssinian plan is to use up all the wood near a town and then transfer the town some miles away, where fresh forests abound. This is all very well in the case of a mere camp like the capital, but Harrar is too solid and unwieldy to dream of such nomadic habits.

But the one insuperable objection remains: the monstrous craft and subtlety of the Abyssinian. You or I might spend ourselves and our treasures in discovering coal or copper or iron or gold or emeralds; we might call new industries into being and establish an era of prosperity; but the Abyssinian would take all the profit, and we should be left out in the cold.

Not long ago it was a matter of some difficulty for any European, and perhaps more particularly for an Englishman, to obtain permission to travel beyond Harrar. Now, thanks to the prestige, which has been restored since Captain Harrington was sent as Diplomatic Agent to Menelik, our countrymen are very welcome. I had scarcely reached Harrar before the Emperor began telephoning to hurry me on. It appears that some officious person had told him that I was bringing letters for him from the Queen of England. The only source I can conceive for such a rumour was that some one at Aden asked me if I would take up some rose-trees from Queen Victoria.



I replied that I should be very glad to oblige a lady, but in the end the parcel went up without me.

After a few days at Harrar, His Majesty's attentions became almost embarrassing. Every morning there would be some amiable inquiry about me by telephone. Why had I not started? Had the Garasmach or anybody else presumed to interfere with my departure? The Garasmach must do everything in his power to assist me. And so forth. The Garasmach, who was present when one of these messages arrived, grew quite nervous, and hastened to protest that he had not impeded me in any way. Why had I not started? Because the mulemen would not be hurried. I have had occasion to describe the vexations which I suffered at the hands of my camelmen, but they were docile lambs or angels of light compared to the infernal mulemen. These are known as nagadis, an Amharic word meaning merchants, but they are really nothing more than carriers. If you send luggage with them, they usually take forty or fifty or even sixty days to cover the 291 miles to the capital. If you accompany them you must probably count upon a journey of a month, and you may consider yourself very lucky or very clever if you induce them to cover the ground in three weeks.

Mr. Gerolimato, the British Consular Agent, kindly found me some nagadis, and one morning a number of oily, grinning Abyssinians strolled into my bedroom before I was up. They had come to take stock of my luggage and make terms. I asked how long we should take to reach Addis Ababa. There was a long pause

and they eyed me thoughtfully, trying to sum up my character. Well, what did I think of thirty days?

Ridiculous! That was less than ten miles a day. At the very least I must cover twenty miles.

The grins expanded half an inch. The men raised their arms and aimed with imaginary guns. It would be a pity to hurry. I should be sure to want to shoot on the way.

No. I must go fast in order to reach the Court for the Christmas festivities. There would be time to shoot on the way back if I wanted to.

With considerable reluctance they proposed twenty-six days. I suggested fourteen. We finally compromised it at twenty, on my agreeing to take several extra mules, pay at a higher rate, and promise a bonus of one dollar per mule for every day saved. This last proviso seemed to provoke vast satisfaction, the grins grew prodigiously, and I flattered myself that all would go very well indeed. Little did I know the Abyssinian muleman!

Mr. Gerolimato smiled mysteriously when I confided my hopes to him. The nagadis had said they would be ready to start on the morrow, but that, he explained, meant that they would come and sew up my luggage in cloth covering on the morrow, but that I should be very lucky if I got off in three or four days. These three or four days passed, but the wretches gave no sign of departure. I plied them with messages and remonstrances, to which they replied politely, but still no move was made. Then at last they said they really would start on the morrow. I made all my

final preparations, only to find that by "start" they merely meant start to fetch their mules, which were out at grass three days away owing to the drought. I was for throwing up these provoking people and looking out for others in their stead, but Mr. Gerolimato convinced me that if I did so it would mean starting in ten days' time at the earliest.

After about a week's delay, I woke up one morning to the old tumult in the yard outside my Egyptian bedroom. "Wariya, Abdi!" "Hajji-oooo!" "Reggel-oooo!" "Ba Menelik!" the voices rang out to an accompaniment of sawing, hammering, cackling, laughter, and general jabbering. High above all was the irritating guttural "Ah—h!" with which every Somali, and more particularly my shikari, the Pilgrim, punctuates his remarks.

I passed out of the gates of Harrar into a pitch dark night. The going was over something between hard earth and soft rock, interspersed with small swamps. As in a tract or religious allegory, the road began quite broad and distinct, presently it became a vague path, then a marsh, and finally we found ourselves in a hillocky wilderness with pitfalls all round. The Pilgrim announced that we had lost the way, and he began to cast about with his lantern in circles, like a will-o'-the-wisp. Presently Abdi, ever the sharpest of my party, came up and solved the difficulty. He pointed to the left and said, "There is the photograph tree!" I began to wonder what sort of new tropical plant this might be. It was evidently now in its dark-room. Then I discovered he meant the

telephone pole, which marks the way right through to Addis Ababa.

We followed the lines until we came to the camp at Lake Aramaya, where a pleasing repast was in process of preparation. A pretty little lake, covered with all kind of waterfowl, and approached by long avenues of candelabra-shaped cactus, with which I was destined to become vastly familiar. Unless it be the umbrella-pine, there is no tree so graceful : imagine an endless succession of grey-green seven-branched candlesticks, fifteen or twenty feet high, like a vision of the loot of Jerusalem. Cut one of them and a thick milky juice spurts out. Mine host of the "Lion" at Harrar went out one day to see if he could not use it as indiarubber, but he was incautious enough to smear some into his eyes, and it blinded him for days.

The journey now presented a great contrast to the transit of Somaliland. The thermometer went down to 49° in the night, and there seemed no absurdity in the mulemen wearing thick sheepskins over their shoulders. What an easy garment : a mere hole for your head, and here is a natural cloak. And the wilderness was left behind. We camped on the grass of an English park, and traversed pleasing stretches of down amid a vista of nodding yellow durra and endless acres of stubble. Here and there the scenery was varied by strange black patches, where this stubble had been burnt according to the lazy local agriculture. Batches of cosy little thatched summer-houses nestled together amid shrubberies of candelabra cactus, not so very unlike English homesteads and attendant farm-



buildings. My camp, as I approached it at sunset, was invariably picturesque with tufts of blue smoke rising reluctantly from half a dozen fires, and the whole herd of mules lounging or sniffing in every direction. All sorts of strange smells filled the air and linger in my memory.

In a few days I was in the midst of mysterious forests. There were gigantic junipers on every hand, here and there graceful trees of umbrella-shape all clothed in a tangle of shrubs and brambles. At frequent intervals we came upon charred stumps; now and again upon a small forest fire—a cascade of blazing brambles, crackling up a ravine and attacking a large tree right up to the topmost branches, while a stream of pale blue smoke wound itself away into the forest. Many jackals bayed in chorus afar off. The sun was hot, but a fresh breeze sang among the leaves. Peering through a gap we saw beneath us low, yellow hills dotted with dark green shrubs, further away higher hills of deeper colour and thicker vegetation, finally a boundless plain with all the colours of a kaleidoscope, fading away into a mist. Let me sum up the scenery by suggesting Switzerland tempered by Sussex.

Now we will leave to the imagination of artists all the lovely woods, russet tints, deep green shadows, weeping lichens, and English-looking parks. Here is a telephone station in the heart of the Galla country. A number of little summer-houses are grouped together inside a huge stockade. As usual the Abyssinian officials are disobliging. They prefer to go on with their eating or dozing, and it is quite a

long time before we can unearth an unsavoury individual wearing a tattered sheet, and induce him to unlock the call-office. This is a bare hut with mud floor and mudded walls, to which the instrument is attached. I ring up the Consul at Harrar, but by the time he has been summoned, this poor little call-office is thronged with Abyssinians, most inquisitive of mortals. One actually sits down on my bench at close quarters and resents it when, misliking his perfume, I push him off.

At first the Abyssinians condemned the telephone as black magic, but now they have succumbed to its delight as a toy. In their country you cannot enjoy the luxury of a private conversation over the lines, for anybody at any of the stations has only to put the tubes to his ear and listen. This the man in charge does nearly all day long. There is no means of isolation, and if you want to ring up one place, you must ring them all up at the same time. It is also difficult to make yourself heard, for apart from the fact that monkeys are probably dancing on the wires somewhere, the odds are that half a dozen natives are trying to converse at the same time. I realised the drawbacks of this system when I was trying to spell an address in Rome, to which I wanted the Consul to transmit a message by post. I would shout three or four letters very distinctly, and then all the rest would be drowned in a perfect babel of squeaky Abyssinian voices. The Government is fully alive to this, and sets apart so many hours very early each morning for the transmission of its own messages. Then a posse of

soldiers is posted at every station to prevent anybody from listening. Really, I found it almost as difficult to converse over fifty miles of Abyssinian line as it is between London and Brighton, the which is saying a good deal.

On reaching the Hawash river, I found the only iron bridge, I might almost say the only bridge of any kind which exists in Abyssinia. It looks



FORDING THE HAWASH.

(*Photograph by CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.*)

somewhat unsteady, and must wobble about alarmingly in a storm. The ravine is precipitously deep, and there is generally a fair amount of water in the river. When the ford is passable, the bridge may not be used. On my way up I crossed by the bridge, but on the return journey I had to use the ford, though the water came very nearly up to my mule's neck, and I fully expected that his sense of humour would

prompt him to seize the opportunity for a roll. The Hawash river would afford an excellent text for a sermon. From small beginnings it grows up into a stream of very fine proportions, and it sets out, as most rivers do, to make its way to the sea. But having rashly elected to take the desert route, it presently loses itself in the sand and is heard of no more. Picture to yourself all the energy of this



FORDING THE HAWASH.

(*Photograph by* CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.)

rushing river, bustling and splashing and roaring and scurrying throughout all eternity only to lose itself in the sand. How typical of the French nation !

After this river comes another waterless desert, which the Somalis and Abyssinians are alike terrified to cross. I camped just over the river, and when I rose next morning I found everybody in a great state of perturbation. "Some very bad men on the



road ; they kill all they find," I was told. I ridiculed this, but my servants replied by pointing to a small body of men, perhaps some six or eight, who were roaming about hither and thither in the jungle. I suggested it might be a caravan, but I was told "No, a caravan he go straight. These men look for some one to kill." Here a group of peasants joined us, two men, a woman, and two donkeys, and announced that

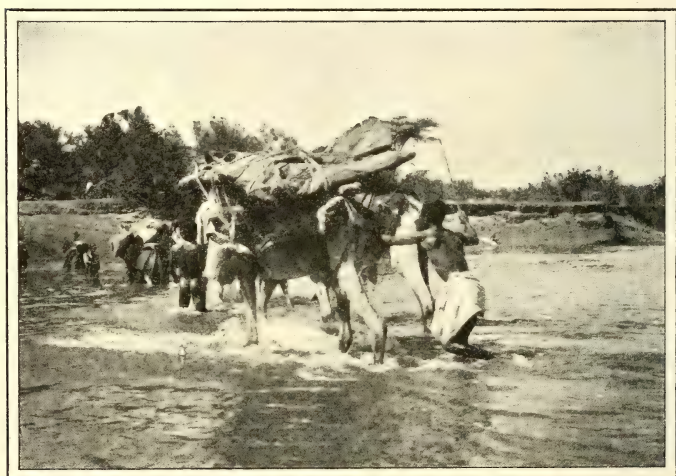


FORDING THE HAWASH.

(Photograph by CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.)

they were going to travel with me to have my protection as far as Tadechamalka on the other side of the desert. One of them went through in pantomime the business of some one having his throat cut. Presently the band of warriors appeared close to the camp : a number of young men with very black shiny bodies, wearing leopard skins over their shoulders. Each rode a fine white horse with

elaborate trappings, and brandished three or four spears in the air. My men brought out all my guns and proceeded to load them ostentatiously, setting their teeth and seeming annoyed with me for laughing. The band halted a few yards away from my breakfast table and some dismounted. They began to talk to my men, who answered very curtly and clutched the guns somewhat convulsively.



FORDING THE HAWASH.  
(*Photograph by* CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.)

It occurred to me that the group would make an interesting picture, so I advanced towards it with my camera. The braves watched me suspiciously, just as a pack of wolves might do under similar circumstances. Then suddenly some one gave a signal and they all galloped off into the jungle before I could obtain a satisfactory snapshot. My men said these people must be at war with somebody, and I saw nothing but

anxious faces all day on the march. Again and again I was solemnly entreated not to go too far away from my caravan, lest somebody should carry *it* off! I asked what the braves had said when they came up, and was told that they had said they were in pursuit of antelopes. "But you no believe them, sah'b. They make one big lie. They hunt men, not koodoo, not oryx, not aoul."

I think it was at beautiful Minnabella (a place with so beautiful a name was bound to be beautiful, methought) that I realised I was in the kingdom of Shoa, the predominant partner in the kingdom of kingdoms which is Ethiopia. The huts were more picturesque than any I had seen before, and stood out against an exquisite deep green background of trees; there were mysterious purple hills with strange ridges and happy valleys hard by; graceful umbrella mimosas thick-set with fragrant golden balls; a strange round church with an unfinished amphitheatre; and genial natives who smiled upon me as Christians and gentlemen. Such were my first impressions, too soon, alas, to be modified. My spirits began to rise, and I flattered myself that all my toil and moil were now at last to find their reward.

At Minnabella my mulemen, who had hitherto stedfastly refused to travel by night, unexpectedly announced that to do so had been their desire all along. Ah, if I would only agree to this, how very much faster we should advance! It seemed that they had formed an impression that I was not an early riser, and I believe they were greatly disappointed

when I hastened to agree to their proposal. If I had refused, what an excellent answer they would have had to any complaints I might make about the slowness of their progression! So we arranged to start at two in the morning, and I retired to rest with my boots on, my staff and wallet in my hand. At three I awoke and found the whole camp plunged in snores. I yelled for Abdi, who started up like one shot and immediately invented an excuse about the clock having stopped. I made him set to work to bustle up everybody, but the mulemen were very drowsy and sulky at being disturbed. Never had they been so slow in collecting and loading the mules. We were not off until ten minutes past five.

Never have I beheld so wonderful a fairy scene. I was riding through endless shrubberies of mimosa, whose golden balls and silver spikes presented the most intoxicating changes of colour in the light of the full moon, under the soft influence of the false dawn, and in the great flood of crimson which accompanied the rising of the sun. Under ordinary circumstances I might have grumbled, for the cold was biting, my festering hands were a shooting agony, and my mule kept coming down on his nose and only recovering his balance by a miracle of luck. Moreover, my fool of a shikari contrived to make me lose the way, and wasted a couple of hours in recovering it. But what mattered anything, in the midst of such divine surroundings, with every bush nodding and waving a fragrant censer as I passed?

For two or three days before reaching the capital



we had to do without wood in camp, for there was scarcely a tree to be seen. Every shrub that could possibly be used for firing had been cleared off years ago. For a while we existed on the few wooden boxes that could be spared by a diligent rearrangement of provisions. Then we had to be content with mules' dung for fuel, which did not seem to improve the flavour of my toast. Such is the scarcity of fuel all about here that the peasants are in the habit of collecting cows' dung and making it into round flat cakes which they sell for a fair price.

It was pleasant to meet plenty of people about and to espy quaint thatched villages in every grove. Flowers were now abundant, including the red-hot poker and many new varieties of blossoms already familiar in English fields. But it was by no means the ordinary idea of tropical vegetation. Small white butterflies with bright scarlet tips flitted about, and one fine afternoon I actually heard the voice of the cuckoo—a cuckoo in January! And the Abyssinians were decidedly more interesting, more real than they had seemed *in partibus* at Harrar. Each wore a blue string round his neck to proclaim his Christianity, and there were few who did not shoulder a straw Robinson Crusoe umbrella.

But my Somalis were as fish out of water. They seemed, like myself, to be forever reflecting how far away was home. In their own country they put no bounds to their hilarity. They could not undertake the lightest duty without bursting forth into some harsh but merry song. It usually took the form of

an antiphon. The Pilgrim, hammering in a peg, would chaunt "Salawak salaku," and a tent-boy would carol forth in triumphant reply, "Sukallò." "Salawak salaku," "Sukallò," they would retort to each other for ten minutes or so with infinite variety of tone and expression. On the march, too, they would while away the time thus, half the men roaring one word and the others capping it with its reply, "Sūkālĕgēsh-Mnāsāhĕgēh, Sūkālĕgēsh-Mnāsāhĕgēh, Sūkālĕgēsh-Mnāsāhĕgēh." I grew rather sick of it in time.

To obtain the precise meaning of these phrases was by no means easy, for the Somalis are not good at interpreting. However, I gathered the kind of thing. It was as though we exclaimed, "Soon be there—here we are, soon be there—here we are"—which would probably pass the time as well as many a fashionable diversion. The phrases are handed down from long tradition, like our own nursery rhymes, and different tribes cherish different antiphons. Sometimes I would observe a man of one tribe teaching his chaunt to men of another tribe, but they always reverted to their own very soon. Sometimes, too, there would be long, improvised chaunts, which it was perhaps as well I did not understand. One man would begin with the equivalent of half a verse of a psalm, the others would all roar it after him, and he would go on by the hour. I heard a story of a lady who travelled in India, her bearers not knowing that she understood their lingo. And this was the chaunt which she overheard: "What a heavy burden we

carry; verily this woman is like unto a mou-ou-ountain!"

But when we found ourselves in Abyssinia, Cadwallo's tongue was cold. No one had the heart to sing. One day the Pilgrim tried it. He hammered in a peg and cried, "Ahellèya." There was no spirit in his voice, the others stared at him in a melancholy way and made no response. He tried again: "Ahellèya." Some one repeated it out of charity; then they all burst out laughing. What a feeble, pitiful attempt! It was no use. They must wait until they were back once more amid the sunny sands of Somaliland.

## Chapter VI

### PLEASURES OF PILGRIMAGE

Sport—Fearlessness of Game—Jackals—Antelopes—Elephants—  
Monkeys—A Brush with a Lioness—Birds—Flies—Locusts—  
Creeping Things—Moths—Without Matches—Rain Everlasting  
—Sunburn—A Mule Caravan—Firing Sore Backs—Obstructive  
Mulemen—A Crisis—A Raid—I Must Draw my Revolver.

Most people who come back from sporting countries to write books about them grow very wearisome with the monotonous details of their sporting exploits, for after all one shot at a wild animal is very like another, and the details only appeal to specialists. I cannot, however, go quite to the opposite extreme and say nothing at all upon the one subject, which is perhaps the most conspicuous in the land of lions. To do any serious shooting between Zaila and Addis Ababa, you must go two or three days' march off the road, and this I could not do, for killing animals means also the killing of a great deal of precious time. Still, for a young man who is anxious to perfect himself in shooting and is not hurried for a month or two more or less, I can conceive no country more appropriate.

Even on the beaten track I was much impressed by the fearlessness of nearly all the animals I saw. This is so in spite of the numbers of sportsmen, who are always taking out their guns there. How much easier,



therefore, must it be a few marches to the right or to the left, where the beasts have had very little opportunity of making themselves acquainted with firearms. The first time I tried to stalk a herd of antelope I gave myself a great deal of unnecessary trouble, dissembling behind bushes and studying the wind and reserving my fire lest the first shot should irretrievably disperse my quarry. I found, however, that directly they became aware of my presence they usually turned round to look at me and would remain while eight or ten shots whizzed about their ears, not always bolting even when one of their number had been laid low. Nor did they ever retire very far. They would disappear over the ridge of a hill and wait within rifle range of its summit for me to try my luck again. The smaller animals would be more fearless still, and might often have been knocked down with a stone or a stick. As I sat at lunch brilliant little birds with blue and orange plumage would hop about and pick up crumbs until a quaint bird<sup>1</sup> with black and white stripes and a long yellow bill made a rush in among them and dispersed them. There were also numbers of pretty little grey and white squirrels, with long, bushy tails; they would run to pick up a bit of bread when I threw it and sit up a few yards away from me nibbling it in both hands. Their tails are much esteemed by the Abyssinians, who believe that they render them invisible in battle.

One day I thought of shooting a jackal, which was hovering about near my camp, for I had heard that

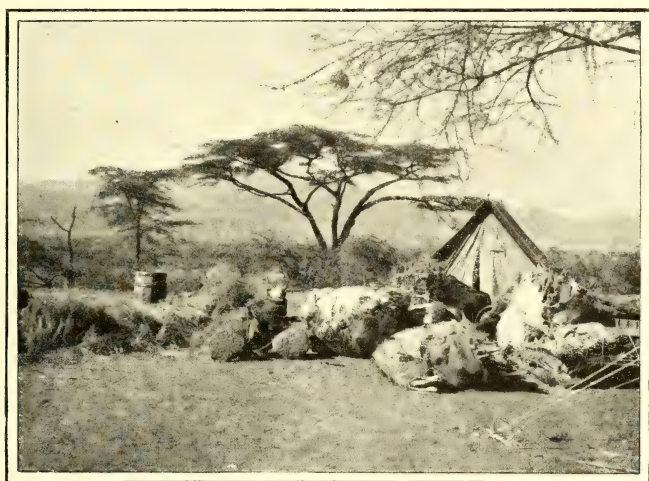
<sup>1</sup> Called godonroto by the Somalis.

the skin of a Somali jackal is worth having. I took up my gun and strolled out to get an easy shot. My servants, thinking to help me, whistled to it, where-upon it turned round and looked at us as though to see what we wanted. Then I put away my gun, for I had not the heart to shoot. It would have been like killing a house-dog. In the same way I never had any desire to kill the hyenas, which constantly prowl about the camp. Most people are rather proud of shooting them, but I cannot conceive how they can consider it sportsmanlike to do so.

Nor could I kill gazelles, having once kept a tame one in a London flat and come to look upon the whole tribe as members of my family. Indeed I felt almost a murderer when I had slain a small antelope, whose big eyes reminded me reproachfully of my pet. Still less could I have killed a digdig, which is a tiny gazelle, scarcely bigger than a hare. I should very much have liked to carry off a live one, but I understand that they never survive in captivity. I am told that they always go about in pairs, and that if the male or female is killed the relict never survives it long, but wanders about near the scene of the tragedy, to die presently of a broken heart.

This tenderness does not apply to the oryx, koodoo, and other antelopes, which are nearly if not quite as large as a mule. They possess magnificent horns, some of which I have been fortunate enough to bring back with me, and I understand that when wounded they are often quite dangerous to their aggressors.

The Abyssinians cherish a vast respect for any one who has killed an elephant or a lion. Indeed the exploit is almost like a patent of nobility. You are entitled thereby to wear a turquoise in your left ear, and to hang elephants' tails over your doorway. To have the right to wear an ivory bracelet, you must, however, have killed ten men as well as several elephants. Elephants are so clever that they very



SKINS AND HORNS PACKED UP AT TADECHAMALKA.

(*Photograph by CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.*)

soon come to understand firearms, and immediately attack any one they see going about with a gun in his hand. I heard a story of a Yankee who went out to shoot elephants in Abyssinia. One day an elephant caught sight of him and started to chase him and his Somali gun-bearer. "Did the elephant catch you?" some one asked when he was telling the story. "No, he didn't, but he caught my bearer, for I tripped him

up." This struck me as a delightful version of the old fable of the cat's-paw, and if I were going to make a speech to-morrow about the war I should utilise it as illustrating the treatment of the late Free State by the Boers.

Monkeys are also interesting to observe in the wild state, and I understand that many people take pleasure in shooting them, particularly the Gereeza variety,



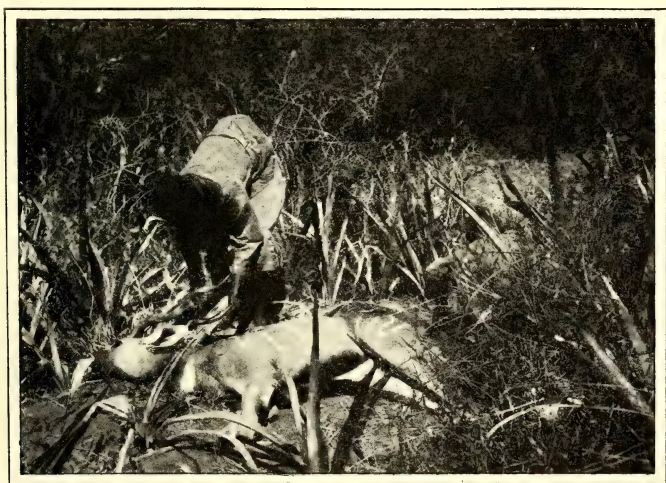
LESSER KOODOO.

(*Photograph by* CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.)

which has a very fine coat. I generally saw monkeys in bands of ten or twelve in a forest or near a big river, scuttling across the road on all fours and darting away among the trees, and I was amused to notice that a mother generally carries her young on her back exactly as a Somali woman does. The monkeys of Abyssinia are said to be very intelligent. They have regular sentinels, who warn them of the approach



of an enemy. In the case of imminent danger, they place their women and children in the centre of a military square; they carry off their wounded from a battlefield, and seem only to need the red cross and the white flag in order to lay claim to civilisation. They understand a great deal about guns, and have been known, when one of their leaders has



LESSER KOODOO.

(*Photograph by CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.*)

been wounded, to attack a party of sportsmen in innumerable hordes and tear them to pieces.

The other chief animals to be met with within easy reach of the caravan route are hartebeestes, the Semmering gazelle (known to the Somalis as aoul, or owl), zebras, leopards, and lions. Zebras are exceedingly valuable to capture, and Captain Harrington told me that the pair which he brought home for Queen Victoria at a cost of £60, would have

fetches a thousand pounds if sold in the open market.

Lions are now very rare except at a great distance from the road. I had, however, the good fortune to encounter one at Bia Kaboba only a few days after I had set out from the coast. I was riding into the nullah at about 8.30 in the morning when the Pilgrim pointed to an enormous ant-hill and said there was an



LESSER KOODOO.

(Photograph by CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.)

animal behind it; he did not know what it was but it was certainly not a gazelle. Was it an oryx? No, it was smaller. I did not feel much interested, having frequently had my hopes raised to no purpose, but I told him to get out my rifle and load it. While this was being done, suddenly a sandy-coloured beast crept round the ant-hill, which was certainly not a hundred yards away, looked at us and began to slink

off into the jungle. Then all my men gave a wild shout of excitement: "A lion! a lion!" As a matter of fact it was a lioness. I snatched my rifle and tried to get a shot, for it would have been a fine feather in my cap to begin my career as a hunter by bringing down the queen of beasts. However, she was too many for me, and was out of reach before I could take aim. Perhaps this was just as well, for I have since



ANT-HILL IN THE JUNGLE.  
(*Photograph by* CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.)

been told that I could not possibly have brought her down with my '303 unless I chanced to hit her in one of a very few vital spots, whereas if I had wounded her, or even if she had been annoyed by the sound of a rifle, she would probably have charged us at once.

One day I came into the billiard-room of the Hôtel du Lion at Harrar and found a French Count busy manufacturing some enormous wild-beast traps.

“Hallo,” said he, “come and look here. I am going to try to bag a lion one of these days. A little while ago when I was at Burka I woke up in the night and found one sniffing at my tent six inches away from my nose. I saw his eyes glistening through the aperture. I had a shot at him in the dark, but he made off. Now I am going to set traps, but I must take care that they are sufficiently strong, for if a lion can break away wounded, even with the loss of a leg, or if he can pull up the trap and carry it off, he may become very dangerous before you have time to look to your weapons.”

There were some curious little sand-coloured birds with imperceptible legs, which hopped about the desert and proved very good eating. There were brilliant metallic blue starlings, called *filmer* by the Somalis. I shot a number of them, thinking they would make my wife some very fine hats, but they lost all their brilliancy after they had been dead a day or two. The most beautiful birds of all were about the size of locusts, but I had no shot small enough for them. There were carrion crows so impertinent that they often pecked at the tassels of my servants' fezzes. Indeed, once Abdi had his fez lifted right off his head and thrown down a few yards away. Nor must I forget the guinea-fowl, which used to run about the nullahs in large flocks. One very hot day I shot two particularly plump ones, and my mouth watered at the prospect of an excellent supper. But by the evening they were so high that they had to be thrown away very far from the camp. I was particularly dis-



appointed not to kill a marabout, also known as a corpse-reviver. This horrible bird hovers about wherever there is a dead mule and feeds on the carrion, but he possesses the most beautiful tail-feathers imaginable. Alas ! I was never fortunate enough to get a shot at one.

To succeed as a sportsman in these regions, you should bring out sporting dogs, and, above all, a good shikari.

There were irritating flies in Somaliland, but they were kind friends compared with their brothers of Abyssinia. If flies are evidence of dirt, the Abyssinians must certainly be the filthiest people on earth. Whenever I passed a party of natives on the road I would suddenly find myself assailed by a small swarm. I could not understand this at first, but presently I observed that every Abyssinian habitually went about with large black clusters on his back and clothes. Unfortunately the wretches seemed to welcome a change from the Ethiopian's skin and invariably proceeded to come and worry me. Never was there such persistency, not even in a Boer. Nothing short of killing them could persuade them to desist. I had to ride with a knotted handkerchief in my right hand and keep beating the air like a flail. But I might drive away my foes a hundred times : they would merely wait until the blow had expended its force and then settle down again quietly just where they were before. When I entered a village the plague was many times worse. I came to believe that all the inhabitants habitually kept large colonies of flies on their backs,

and that these were ever on the alert for a stranger. To outward appearance they were merely the ordinary repulsive house-fly, but they possessed a pertinacity and effrontery which house-flies never reach amongst us. Their delight was to settle in my hair and start wild hornpipes, or still better, to invade my ears and seek to play on their drums. An even more favourite diversion was to prevent my drinking. I would pour out a cup of tea and congratulate myself upon comparative immunity. But the enemy were only waiting behind a kopje. Suddenly three or four skirmishers would make a rush for my mouth while six others would storm the inside of my cup and start a mad waltz, and a rear-guard would open order upon my hands, eyes, nose, and neck. I believe even S. Francis would have cursed such aggravating "little sisters." Down would go my cup with a crash, spilling most of the precious liquid, and the engagement would become general. But it was no use beating the air: the enemy were far too wily for such tactics to avail. After weeks of campaigning I discovered that the only plan was to fight them with their own crafty strategy. I would lean back in my chair and pretend not to mind; on the camp table in front of me I would pour out libations of tea, sugar, jam, or anything else that is pleasant to flies; then at the psychological moment, crash would come a sledge-hammer whack with a knotted towel, and when once I got my eye in I thought nothing of the historical "seven at one blow." I shall never forget Abdi's amazement and amusement when he found me engaged in this grim sport, for

to a Somali it is incredible that any one should object to the society of flies. He proposed that one of my servants should be stationed behind me with a whisk to keep them off, but I reflected that this might only increase the plague.

Another plague which I encountered was less irritating and far more interesting. When I reached my camp at Challenko I noticed thousands and thousands of big white birds, clustered over the greater part of the valley, lying in wait against the rocks in immense armies, scudding across the sky from time to time in regiments. No one could tell me why they were there, though all agreed that they had never observed more than two or three together hitherto. During lunch I remarked a few locusts hovering about the top of the long grass. They resembled huge grasshoppers with thick, greasy bodies some two inches long and bright wings of variegated gauze. Presently I heard a loud fluttering sound like that of some supernatural machinery. I looked up and beheld a driving rain of locusts whirling at a terrific rate high in air against a background of fleecy white cloud. It was unlike any other sight I ever saw. The only way I can convey the impression is by comparing it to a storm of falling leaves, which it resembled in colour and method of whirling—autumn leaves with which a small hurricane was sporting. In about ten minutes the marvel entirely passed away.

Presently another army rushed past in much the same way, but afforded a different effect against a background of trees. Not long after this had passed

away I heard a loud hum, like that of a forest of telegraph poles. This gradually translated itself into the distinct flapping of myriads of wings, and I found myself in the very midst of a dense cloud of locusts. The main body advanced straight forward at a great pace, while smaller groups, presumably officers, whirled about as though to whip up the others and give orders. Great skill was certainly displayed in avoiding contact with trees, tents, men, and other obstacles, and though I could scarcely see a yard in front of my nose for many minutes I was never even touched by the tip of a wing. When the last flight had passed away, I observed that a considerable number had settled on the ground and were crawling about in search of food. I asked Abdi whether people ate those creatures, and he replied with some contempt that he believed the Abyssinians did so. The white birds at least had no scruples on this score, and I now realised why they had entrenched themselves in this strange valley. No sooner had a cloud of locusts passed by than a detachment of birds swooped down upon the ground to pick up the stragglers, while other flying squadrons of birds started off in pursuit of the retreating armies of locusts.

I have always hated insects, but there seemed to be no escape from them in the highlands of Abyssinia. They would crawl about inside my tent at all hours of the night and morning, great fat caterpillars which it was very unpleasant to squash against the canvas, lice with a particularly putrid odour, and strange beetles, which might or might not prove poisonous. All this



induced an irritating jumpiness. If I felt anything tickling me in my hair or under my collar, I was almost ready to leap into the air. Indeed I have never quite got over it, and to this day I feel ready to tear off my coat or plunge my head into a basin of water when the fancy seizes me that I am still undergoing the persecution of Abyssinian insects. It is still difficult for me to go to bed or put on my boots without first instituting a regular search to see whether some reptile may not be concealed. This annoyance I owe almost entirely to an Englishman I met with his caravan at Tadechamalka. He told me how one evening when retiring to rest he had happened by the merest accident to pull open his sheets and discover a particularly venomous snake coiled up between them. I would much rather not have known this, for it compelled me to worry myself with a search every night, and as I never found anything I might just as well have been left in blissful ignorance of the possibility.

I was also tormented a great deal by moths. Living in the open air is all very well and does you a great deal of good, but the enjoyment of your dinner is considerably marred by the invasion of nasty creatures attracted by your lamp. I could rarely eat a plate of soup without having to bale out several spoonfuls of uninvited guests, who seasoned my meal with their down. And they would dart at me with such vehemence, banging against the lamp like bullets and ricocheting furiously into my face. Before the meal was over, my table, chair, food, clothes, and the

ground for many yards around would be strewn with loathsome wriggling bodies.

I used to say to myself sometimes that dining would be much pleasanter by starlight, but when the rain drenched all my matches I soon came to a different opinion. The cook said he could remedy the disaster at once, and proceeded to spread them all out in front of a fire to dry, but he put them too near and presently they all went off with a fizz. An official at a telephone station offered me two matches for a dollar, but my cook, who was of a frugal mind, would not allow me to run to such an extravagance; so we came very near finding ourselves where Moses was on a certain celebrated occasion, until happily I met a Greek who exchanged a box with me for a new loaf, which he regarded as an extraordinary luxury in the wilds. Matches are not, however, really so indispensable as people imagine. Indeed the Abyssinians have only known them for a very few years, and that merely on the beaten track. Their method was and is to rub two pieces of wood together, like the savages of tradition, until they get some sparks with which to kindle a bundle of hay or straw. This having been done once, the fire is rarely allowed to go completely out from year's end to year's end, and I found that wherever I went, there was always sure to be some native encampment which would provide me with the necessary light.

The day after I left Harrar I could scarcely believe my eyes when I was overtaken by a shower of rain. I had lately come through a barren and thirsty land,

where next to no water was, and I was entering Abyssinia in what is known as the dry season. In the summer, I understood, there would be rain all day and every day, but now it was unheard of. As to that I was soon to be undeceived. At Challenko I was caught in a tropical downpour while stalking some of the big white birds who were stalking the locusts. It was no easy task to wade back to my camp through sloughs which had suddenly come into existence.

On January 7th I wrote from the forest of Kunni: "Yesterday was physically the most unpleasant I can remember. For nearly seven hours I was staggering through ankle-deep slush uphill. Take some eighteen miles of ploughed field on the side of a steep mountain, sprinkle copiously with big, jagged stones, rain upon them vehemently for ten days, season with fog and clouds : then you have yesterday's road."

"January 8th.—Never have I known such hard going. Walking and riding were alike pain and grief. For a time we would generally find a certain relic of a path on one side of the regular caravan track. Then it would end abruptly ; we would find we were knee-deep, and a long, struggling splash would take us through the slough of despond to a feeble vestige of a path on the other side. This would soon be exhausted in the same way, and each time we struggled over the slough, we found the path of salvation shorter and sloppier, until at last there was nothing for it but to wade or slide through the mud in the middle, bumping

into hidden boulders at every step, getting splashed up to the eyes in fœtid, stinking black muck.<sup>1</sup> Faugh!"

Happy, light-hearted Somalis—how many shortcomings one had to condone in them when they found fun in such miseries, amid clouds so dense that you scarcely saw a yard ahead, and a drizzling Scots mist, which soaked into your very vitals. It is difficult for people who live in houses to realise the extent of such a drenching. When I opened my trunks in the security of a tent, I found everything, right into their very centre, was dripping. A Gladstone bag was reduced to pulp and now presents the appearance of a wizened caricature. It was hopeless to attempt a change of raiment, for the clothes I had packed up were nearly as badly drenched as the suit I wore. Sheets, blankets, pillows, rugs, all were hopelessly sodden. My keys were rusty, my matches were reduced to a paste. For six days and six nights I lived in a cloud, reeking with wet like a water-nymph. Yet so well does Nature adapt one to his surroundings that I never had a twinge of rheumatism nor even the menace of a cold.

At last, after leaving Kunni telephone station, I beheld a gleam of sunshine, which seemed like a long-forgotten delight. As I proceeded through the woods and down the hill, the sunshine grew more and more unmistakable. When I approached the valley I looked back and saw a beautiful cloud of the purest

<sup>1</sup> On my return journey, when this was again dry land, I was able to cover in two hours and thirty-five minutes what had taken me seven and a half hours on the way up.



white hanging over the summit of an exquisite dark-green mountain. My admiration was, however, tempered by the reflection that for six days I had lived in that cloud. It was like a fairy tale to emerge from it and bask in the light of the sun once more. Goodbye to rainland, welcome sunland ! On reaching camp everything we possessed was dragged out and exposed to the welcome warmth.

One always imagines there is nothing like rain-water for the complexion, and I expected to come out of cloudland with a skin like that of a new-born baby. But even that consolation was denied me. I had been saturated with water all this time, and now there seemed no greater delight than to let the pores drink in every sunbeam. This was all very agreeable for the moment ; but presently I discovered that a sort of nettlerash was being developed all over my hands. In the course of a few days this grew into great throbbing, festering blisters, which all ran into one another, and caused me the most acute pain I have ever experienced. It lasted for weeks, keeping me awake at night, and making it impossible for me to hold my reins, except with great thick bandages, like boxing-gloves. Then my face began to peel, as from the effect of sun upon perpetual snow, and I began to reflect that I should indeed present a pretty sight to set before King Menelik.

There are certain differences between travelling with camels and travelling with mules, which are perhaps worthy of mention. It often amused me to sit and watch the mulemen preparing for a start in

the morning. They were very leisurely over it always. First a number of pegs were hammered into the ground. Then two little ropes with loops, like baby lassoes, were attached to each peg. A mule was led up, and hobbled by the foreleg with them. A bundle of sacking was placed on the mule's back, and over this a kind of saddle, made of stuffed skins or native garments. I discovered in process of time that the men were very fond of conveying a good deal of their own baggage or merchandise under the guise of this saddle, but it was no use protesting, for they always had some very good reason ready. Over the saddle was placed a piece of wood shaped like a V upside down. On the slopes of this my baggage was rested, while long leathern straps were swung round and round it and the animal's belly. Before tying the straps the men never failed to put up their feet against the mule's flanks on either side, and tug and tug until the strap was sufficiently tight. This was evidently more or less of an art, for when the mules were loaded by my own men on an emergency, or by an inexperienced hand, the load would nearly always swing round and threaten to come off after half an hour's march. The mules had no bit or bridle, but only a collar like a very rough bow. The wooden part of this was stuffed into the animal's mouth while he was being loaded; on making a start it was taken out and allowed to slip upon his neck, where it was useful for securing him if he became fractious or tried to run away. And the mules did very often become fractious, a favourite plan with them being to lie

down directly their loads had been put on and refuse to budge, however much they might be kicked or beaten. The men were certainly not over kind to them. They welcomed a short march, but that was really on account of their own laziness, and I imagine that the mules had very little to eat beyond what they contrived to pick up for themselves. Nor does the method of loading seem to have been a very satisfactory one, although it must have been in use during many generations. A mule never went many days without developing the most horrible sores from the friction of the load. For this the invariable cure was to burn the wounds with red-hot irons.

Nearly every evening, when I was trying to summon up an appetite for dinner, I would observe a group of men leading off an unfortunate mule to their camp-fire. They would twist ropes round his legs and then give them a sudden jerk to trip him up. In a trice he would be sprawling on his back and a couple of men would be sitting on his head, as though he were a London cab-horse. Then a horrible figure would advance from the fire, holding out a red-hot iron, and I would turn away my head, but there was no mistaking the hissing sound when it came into contact with the poor beast's flesh, nor the loathsome smell of singeing which instantly pervaded the whole camp. I am told that when horses undergo operations they sometimes scream aloud with pain, but I noticed that the mules never uttered a sound. They would wriggle and writhe and kick, while their bodies were being burned, but directly it was all over and

they were allowed to rise, they would stroll away and begin to nibble grass quite unconcernedly, as though nothing had happened. Next day the wounds would appear to be more or less healed, but the cure was by no means a permanent one, for the packs soon rubbed away the skin again, and the operation had to be repeated. I have discussed this subject with various people in Abyssinia, but I could obtain no certain information as to the success of the cure. Some said that it was merely a very barbarous method of patching up a sore; others insisted that it did a great deal of good, and hurt very little.

My troubles with my mulemen will best be illustrated by a few quotations from my letters and diaries.

Garsa, Sunday night, December 31, 1899.—The first day from Harrar I marched three hours. To-day (the second) two hours and thirty-five minutes. Directly I have received my mail, I shall insist on faster progress.

Garsa, Monday, January 1, 1900.—A row with the mulemen this morning. They objected to my making two marches a day. No other gentleman had ever done as I did. Unless I gave way they would pay me back my money and I might find other mules, hoity-toity! I pointed out that I had paid for extra mules in order to be able to travel quickly and comfortably; that the more trouble they gave me, the less backshish they would get in the end; and, finally, that I held them to their bargain.

Kolubie, January 2nd.—More rows with the mulemen yesterday. At nightfall I came to a hollow in



the hills, and found that the second detachment of the caravan had unloaded the mules and sent them off to grass, though the others had gone on ahead.

ABDI : " They say they won't go on."

I : " Tell them they must."

ABDI : " They *won't*, sir."

I : " Which of them refuses? "

ABDI : " That one."

I go and shout at the culprit, and prod his bare skin very hard with my stick. He makes a show of resistance, but at last consents to help Abdi, who has gone to drive in the mules meanwhile. Then the mules are loaded and we march on again.

Row continued on reaching camp. I seated myself in my deck-chair, as though on a throne, and said to my servants, " Fetch hither the Nagadi Ras " (merchant prince, or chief muleman). This personage went on fumbling sulkily with a mule, so I told my men to drag and push him. He began by taking a very high tone : he was a merchant, not a servant, and so forth. I took a higher tone still, talked of using force, would have him punished at Addis Ababa, &c. Then he became shifty, promised to do all I bade him, but presently refused to allow my barrels to be filled with water on the morrow. He had advised my taking a mule to carry barrels where water was scarce, but now declared the mule could only carry them empty, which I pointed out would not be very useful.

Challenko, January 3rd.—A crisis with the mulemen. I found they had entrenched themselves here

in the morning after three hours' march, and declined to proceed. I sent word that we must start again directly after luncheon, but no notice was taken. In process of time their leader came out from his camp at the other end of the valley. I asked how soon he would be ready to start. He replied quite coolly, "To-morrow." I argued and railed, but to no purpose. He took refuge in yarns about one mule having broken its back and the others being tired or sore. After exhausting diplomacy, I had him driven off with sticks, and I tried to bribe one of his subordinates to let me have six mules with which to push on fast, taking only the essentials. He was willing, but afraid of his superiors, and I have small hopes of a deal.

Late last night the "Prince" sent word that he would not start at all to-day. This morning early, before I was up, two of my men went down to remonstrate; and he said he would start. But a few minutes after their return a man came up to say that, after all, there would be no start. I realised that the moment had come for vigorous action.

So after breakfast I went down with all my men, two carrying guns over their shoulders and Abdi nursing a loaded Mauser pistol ostentatiously. The Prince came out of his tent looking very sulky, and all his men gathered round him for a palaver. I said, "I have come to insist upon it that you shall either start at once or give me six mules with which to push on fast to Addis Ababa."

He smiled an oily smile, wrung his hands depre-

catingly and answered, "Esshi! Esshi! (Certainly) I will go at once. Go you back to your camp and prepare your chattels, and I will make ready here meanwhile."

"No," said I, "you have told me so many lies that I will not budge until I see the loading begun."

This disconcerted him a good deal, for he evidently meant to get me away and then change his mind again, so he wandered off into complaints about my insulting him, striking his men, &c., while he was only too anxious to meet my wishes. At length I saw men sent off, a file of mules being driven into camp, and tents being pulled down, so I departed. First, however, I asked how many more days remained before Addis Ababa.

He replied coolly, "Twenty-two."

"But," I said, "you agreed to get there in twenty days from Harrar."

"No, sir," he replied. "You offered us extra pay if we could get there in less than twenty days. We knew that was impossible, but we said 'Esshi!' in order to please you."

This is rather nice and naïf.

"Well, how far will you go to-day?"

"To Shola."

"How far is that?"

"Very far. Too far. At least five hours."

"Humph!"

Derru, January 4th.—The caravan started at 10.50, I at eleven this morning. After one hour's ride, I found that the "Prince" had encamped at Shola and that

the second detachment was just turning off the road to join him. I leaped off my beast, rushed down a quarter of a mile of durra-stubble and headed them. I was just in the nick of time. Abdi shouted, the Pilgrim waved a gun, all my men were hugely excited. I began to belabour the baggage mules with my sword-stick. Slowly, surely we drove them all up into the road again, and they began winding round the hill like a long snake. I sent the Pilgrim to the head of the column and posted my other men at intervals with orders to prevent all attempts at camping. I myself brought up the rear, and felt like a cattle-lifter driving his booty before him. The second headman of the nagadis (Merchant Prince II.) accosted me with a cock-and-bull story about there being no water ahead. I said I didn't care. He said he would consent to go a little way further on to please me. I said I was going on to Derru. He laughed derisively at the very idea, and his men joined in a chorus of derision. "Ha! ha! ha! To Derru! That's very good! Ha! ha! ha!"

I said nothing, but plodded on very slowly at the rear of the long column. I was as alert as a lynx, and only allowed myself five minutes for a biscuit and a drop of whiskey under a bush in the rain. After three and a half hours of this, Merchant Prince II. came up and implored me most humbly to stop. He said one of his horses and two of his mules had broken down; all would die if we went on any further.

"Is this Derru?"



“Yes.”

“Very well, we will camp here as I arranged.”

He threw up his cap and invoked the blessings of Heaven on my head in an outburst of fervent gratitude. When we camped I found that I had raided twenty-six mules, three horses, and one donkey, not to mention a variety of merchandise which does not belong to me.

That evening a group of peasants was jogging along a path near the camp with expressions of the utmost content, for each carried a bundle of durra stalks, and he looked forward to a nice comfortable chew after his day's work. My Abyssinian servant suddenly rushed out towards them and took toll—one stick from each. They looked surprised, but shrugged their shoulders and did not seem to mind. Then, amid roars of laughter in camp, my servants and most of the mulemen rushed forward one at a time and each took similar toll, till the poor wretches had nothing left. Presently a man came along with only one stick, and I felt rather ashamed and sorry when this was taken away from him, and he proceeded on his way looking decidedly crestfallen.

Evidently I am quite the filibuster, I reflected. Not only do I raid cattle, but my servants rob poor men of their sugar sticks.

Burka, January 5th.—I expected trouble this morning, but the mulemen set out quite tamely, and we have done a fairly good day's march. When we reached the Derru telephone station, I found Merchant Prince II. waiting to wire a complaint. I gave him

some whiskey and a cigarette, and these seemed to conquer him completely. He protested that the English were the best people in the world ; he would always be my servant ; he would find fresh mules at Kunni, &c., &c. He sang most of the way hither, and insisted on holding my stirrup every time I mounted my mule. My servants are delighted, and my prestige (which has always been high with them) has risen to the skies. If all goes well I shall have saved at least a week by this *coup d'état*.

Hirna, January 6th.—Merchant Prince II. is growing troublesome. This morning he absolutely refused to collect the mules at 7.30 because it was raining. As it rains nearly all the time, we should not get on very fast.

Shola Kunni, January 7th.—Rain everlasting. I detect grave disinclination all round, even on the part of my own men, to make a start to-day.

Borema, January 8th.—This morning I had a final battle with the nagadi. He announced that he would not let me go unless I killed him. I said, "Very well ; anything to oblige you." I went into my tent and fetched out my revolver. I sat down in front of him caressing it ostentatiously. He began to hesitate ; meanwhile my men were collecting and loading the mules. Abdi told him I should certainly shoot him if he interfered with me. Then he grew frightened and tried to impose conditions. If he let me go, would I do so and so ?

Certainly not.

Very slowly the mules were laden, while I waited and waited in the pitiless rain.

As I set out at last, he said he hoped I "would not put bad things in my belly," by which he meant that I would not bear a grudge against him.

I replied by pointing to my revolver and saying I should like to put some of its bad things (*i.e.*, bullets) into his belly. Then he entered into the humour of the situation.

After that I had no further friction and pressed on to Addis Ababa without undue delay.

The joy of arriving at last! But I could not help recalling a hymn I once learned, something about "torn sails, provisions short, and only not a wreck."

## Chapter VII

### MENELIK AND HIS CAPITAL

Where was the Capital?—The British Agency—Abyssinian Architecture—A Movable Capital—Barracks—Locomotion—The British Minister—Horses and Dogs—An Abyssinian Irishman—Climate—Foreign Legations—Captain Ciccodicola—M. Lagarde—Republican State—Russian Officials—Market Day—Horse-dealing—Audience of the Emperor—The Palace—Kissing Hands—Presents—Sympathy for England—An Impression of Menelik—Appearance—Manner—Education—Character—Detractors—The Emperor's Band—Habits—The Empress.

My last march towards the capital seemed as though it would never end. I had been led to expect that I should arrive in less than three hours, but nearly four had rolled by before I happened to turn round and ask one of my men, "When on earth are we ever going to reach Addis Ababa?"

"But, sah'b, here it is."

"Where?"

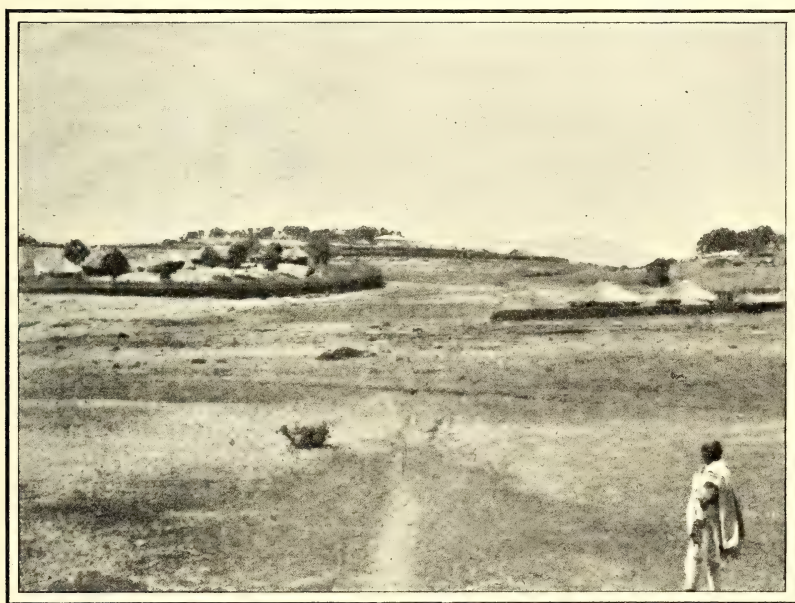
"Here, we have already arrived."

I looked around incredulously, and saw nothing but a few summer-house huts and an occasional white tent, all very far from each other, scattered about over a rough, hilly basin at the foot of steep hills. I would scarcely admit that I was approaching a village. That this could be the capital of a great empire, the residence of the King of Kings, seemed monstrous



and out of the question. "Then, pray, where is Menelik's Palace?" I asked, with a sneer. The men pointed to the horizon, and I could just make out what seemed to be a fairly large farmstead with a number of trees and huts crouching on the top of a hill.

As we advanced, the buildings drew slightly more closely together, but I still refused to recognise a

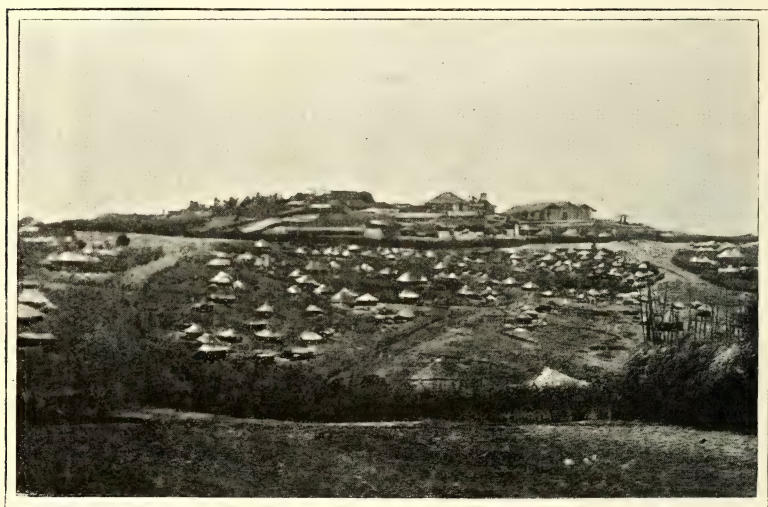


WHERE IS THE CAPITAL

town in the wide stretches of turf, broken by deep ravines and studded with rare summer-houses and booth-like tents.

After a long peregrination we arrived at the British Agency compound, where Captain Harrington was kind enough to invite me to pitch my camp. The Agency consists of some eight acres of ground sur-

rounded by a mud wall three or four feet high, and comprising a number of tents and tukuls. Properly plastered and decorated inside, furnished with civilised carpets, chairs, writing-tables, and wardrobes, it is amazing how comfortable these rude cabins can become. Two huge tents serve as dining-room and drawing-room, and arouse the admiration of everybody by their magnificence. Before I left, Captain



MENELIK'S PALACE.

Harrington had begun to build himself a regular house, which was to consist of some eight huts, connected by mud passages so as to form a parallelogram enclosing a courtyard. The general effect would be that of a feudal castle, and I should not wonder if by this time it is already complete. Once you can induce workmen to adhere to a job in Abyssinia, they call buildings into being almost with

the rapidity of magic. The chief difficulty lies in the fact that every Abyssinian hates work. He thinks that the Gallas or some other slave should do all his work for him. It is only his inordinate greed for money that ever induces him to stoop to manual labour. When builders are needy, they will flock to your call in large numbers and toil away for a week unless you are foolish enough to accede to their



Capt. Harrington. Capt. Powell-Cotton. Mr. Harrison. Mr. Baird.

BRITISH AGENCY COMPOUND.

demand for payment in advance. In any case at the end of a week they will insist upon being paid for what they have done, and then they will go away for a fortnight or so to spend the money they have earned. Neither threats nor promises are of the least avail to lure them back until they have completed their orgy.

They are, moreover, extremely lazy while at work, and it is only by employing great numbers of them



that you shall build fast, though the process is excessively easy. A circle is drawn on the turf and a number of fairly deep holes are made in it. Into these are planted stout sticks some eight or ten feet long. Great buckets of mud are brought to smear against them and in a day or two they have caked quite dry in the sun and wind. The roof is made of similar sticks laid so as to taper to a point,



BUILDING.

(1) A circle is made in the ground.

and finally covered with thick thatch. The thatching is really very artistic, and constitutes perhaps the only successful Abyssinian industry. A few days after the thatch has been completed your tukul is ready to be occupied.

Regular houses are very rare, and consist for the most part of glorified tukuls two or three or four times the usual diameter, which is rarely more than nine feet.



The Emperor and a few of the foreign representatives have succeeded in causing stone buildings to be erected, but only by the use of forced labour and with very indifferent results.

Some nine years ago Menelik's capital was at Entotto, a couple of hours' ride up the hill behind Addis Ababa. Now only two churches and a few brown ruins remain of a town which must have



BUILDING.

(2) Stout sticks are planted.

comprised fifty thousand souls. The reason of its abandonment was that all the wood had been exhausted for building and fuel. The Abyssinians are most improvident in the matter of wood, cutting down forests in a haphazard way and never troubling to replant. The consequences of this are already being felt at Addis Ababa; wood is now brought thither from a distance of sixteen miles, and it

is certain that within a very short space of time Menelik will be obliged to shift his capital once more to the neighbourhood of fresh woods. This is not by any means the hardship which it would be in a civilised country. The capital is rather a camp than a town, and there is no particular trouble in rooting up a tukul and planting it elsewhere.

The only other form of architecture which remains

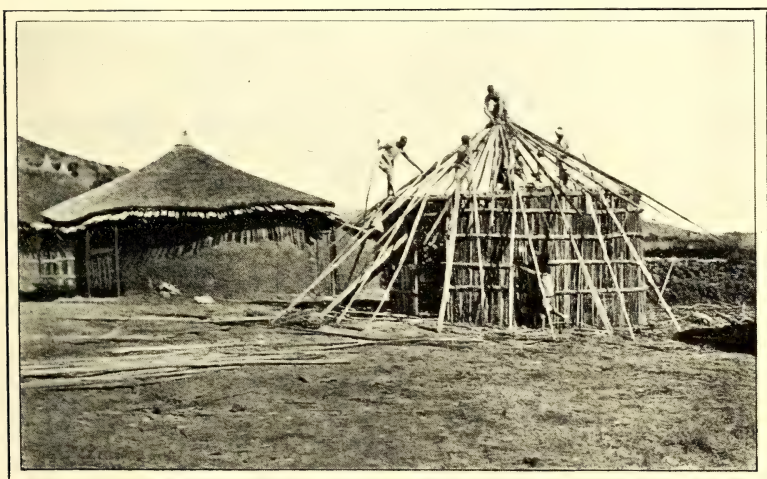


BUILDING.

(3) The roof is made of similar sticks.

to be described consists of the hovels where the soldiers go. These barracks can only be compared to a number of hollow haystacks or mows, which cover enormous stretches of ground, figuring in a bird's-eye view like a flock of sheep. Their furniture consists of little more than a gun and a pan or two, and they are scarcely more elaborate than the lair of a wild animal, merely serving to keep out the wind and wet.

To appreciate Addis Ababa it is necessary to realise that this strange capital covers some fifty square miles, and contains a very large population, which has never been numbered. Streets there are none, and to go from one part of the town to the other you must simply bestride your mule and prepare to ride across country. Three-quarters of an hour at least are necessary for a pilgrimage from the British Agency to the Palace, and



THATCHING.

as much again to the market. On either of these journeys you must cross three or four deep ravines with stony, precipitous banks and a torrent-bed full of slippery boulders. Generally in the course of any expedition I chanced to cross a single rail, which seemed to lead nowhere. I had some difficulty in meeting with any one who knew the use or meaning of this. At last I learned that it had been laid for the purpose of conveying goods and building material to



and fro, but the Abyssinians are so conservative that nothing would induce them to spare themselves labour by making use of it. Similarly, when the Emperor introduced wheelbarrows, labourers only made use of them when they were under their master's eye. Directly they were left to their own devices, they



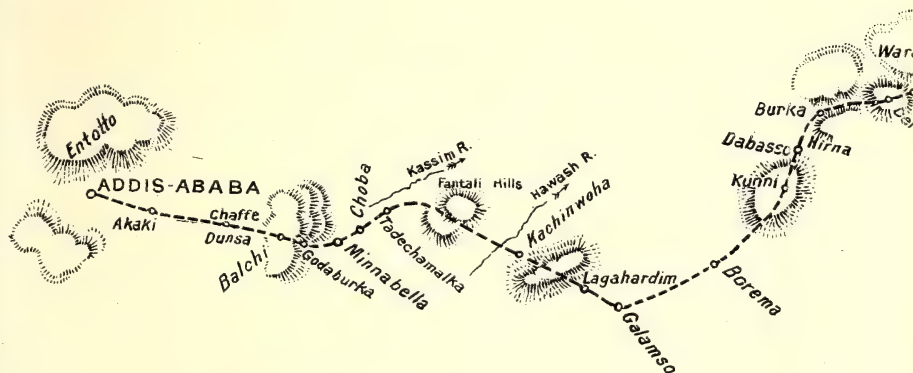
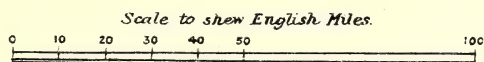
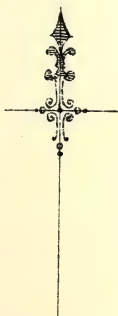
ADDIS ABABA.

hastened to return to their old accustomed method of carrying things on their backs.

Life at the capital is not likely to commend itself to many travellers. Indeed I should not have enjoyed it myself save for the society of Captain Harrington. He is quite a young man, and has carved his career with unexampled rapidity, distinguishing himself in the Indian Army, then as a "Political," being



ROUGH SKETCH  
OF THE ROUTE FROM  
Z A I L A  
— TO —  
ADDIS-ABABA.











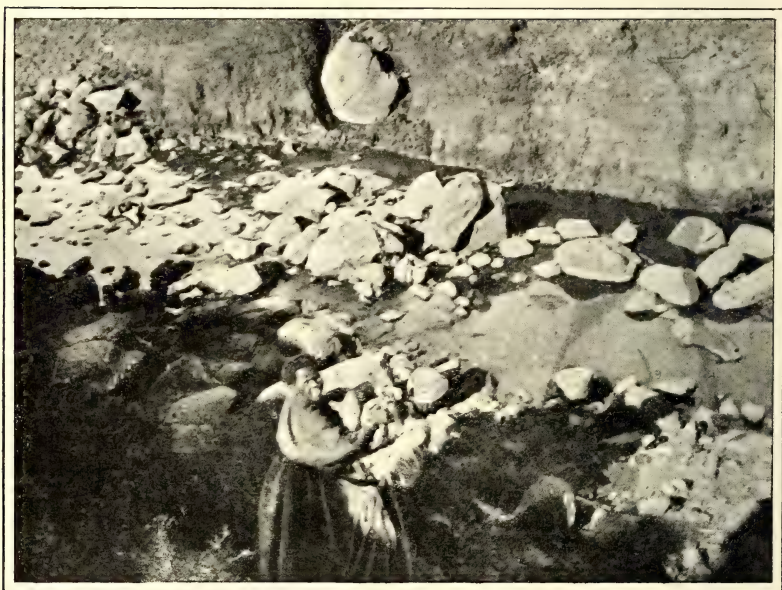
made Consul at Zaila by the Indian Government, remaining there after the transfer of Somaliland to the Foreign Office, and now two years ago, being accredited as Minister Plenipotentiary to the Imperial Court of Ethiopia. When he arrived Menelik was virtually under the thumb of the French and Russians, who had had everything their own way, and it is a great triumph that he should so quickly have con-



ADDIS ABABA.

trived to oust them from the Emperor's good graces. His success is largely due to the fact that His Majesty has taken a strong personal fancy to Captain Harrington. It is almost the first time that any European has come to him without wanting something, and this has influenced him enormously, not merely in his appreciation of our representative, but also in his estimate of our country. Moreover, as Captain Harrington has

remarked to me, we have this advantage—that English visitors to Abyssinia have nearly always been gentlemen, whereas the various foreign adventurers are of a very different kidney. It is to be hoped that this may continue to be the case, for if Captain Harrington heard of the approach of any undesirable visitor, he

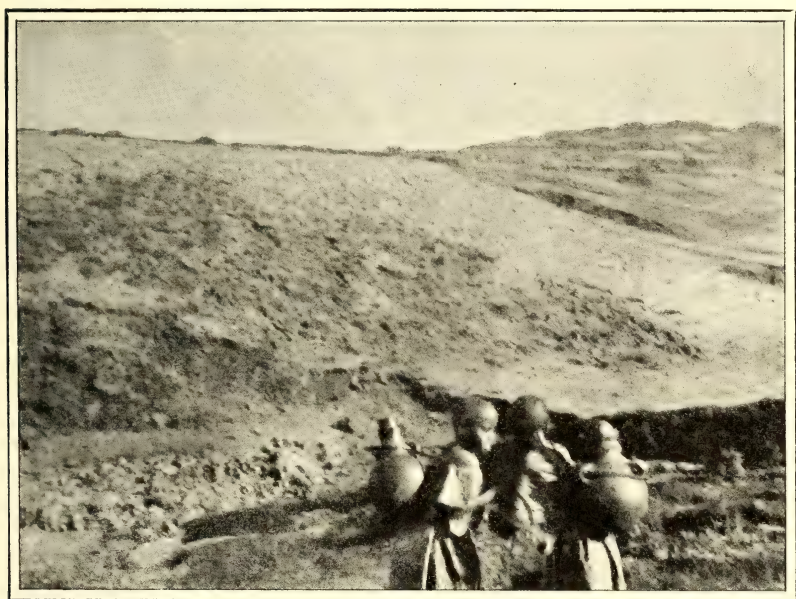


A RAVINE IN THE CAPITAL.

would only need to give Menelik a hint and permission to travel up would be refused.

He afforded me some interesting information as to the success of Indians who have settled in Abyssinia. They are completely cutting out the French merchants, who have already begun to complain bitterly about the competition. The fact is that an Indian can travel about with one servant and a minimum of personal

baggage, whereas a French merchant travels like a prince, with great retinue and every conceivable luxury. Moreover, the Frenchmen give themselves ridiculous airs. One of their shopkeepers, who had been summoned to the Palace, sent in after ten minutes to say that he would not wait any longer. The Indians also



A RAVINE IN THE CAPITAL.

derive considerable assistance from the weekly post, which any British subject is allowed to use, while the French postal service is unsafe and irregular.

The French are for ever complaining that their traders cannot make a success in Abyssinia, or, indeed, anywhere else. But they expect too much too quickly, and I can throw a little light upon a system of sharp practice, which may pay for a moment, but cannot



answer permanently. Before my departure from Addis Ababa, I had occasion to visit the store of one of the leading French traders, as some of my supplies were running out. He showed me several shelves of bottles, and I noticed in the two lower ones some very elaborate labels: "Grande Marque Extra Fine," and all the rest of it. Moreover, many bottles were done up in wire-netting, like the very choicest and oldest brands in Europe. My curiosity was pricked as to the market which the man could hope to find for such luxuries in the heart of Abyssinia, but he said with a smile, "I don't recommend those. They are intended for the natives, and contain the filthiest muck you ever imagined." This struck me as a very eloquent as well as a very frank summary of French colonial trade.

Captain Harrington had secured a number of fine Abyssinian horses, which ought to thrive well under the supervision of a shrewd English groom. When I was there he had also a number of beautiful Arabs, which were resting after their journey before they should be presented to the Emperor. They seemed to me to have travelled very well; but the same cannot be said of the dogs which had accompanied them. A number of greyhounds, also intended for His Majesty, had required a great deal of coddling on the journey. They even wore leather shoes, and on the first sign of fatigue were carried in panniers on camel or muleback. The amusing thing about this was that a semi-native dog, which had been to Egypt with Lord Lovat and had now been brought back by Mr. Baird, the



attaché, seeing that the other dogs were carried, immediately pretended to be lame and insisted on being carried also.

Perhaps the most interesting sight at the Agency was an Irishman named McKelvie, who was imprisoned in Abyssinia at the time of Lord Napier's expedition, and after the relief of Magdala preferred to remain on in the country. He married an Abyssinian wife, has Abyssinian children, lives in an Abyssinian house, wears the Abyssinian shamma with its broad red band, walks about barefoot, mounts a horse in the Abyssinian fashion from the right-hand side, and rides with his big toe inside the hook which does duty for an Abyssinian stirrup: indeed, is in many respects more Abyssinian than the Abyssinians themselves. He ought to be persuaded to provide the materials for a book about all the wonderful adventures he has had during the last thirty years, taking part in a variety of civil wars, being more than once condemned to death, and undergoing all sorts of mortal perils. Unfortunately, however, he is very chary of recounting his exploits, and most of them have to be gleaned more or less inaccurately second-hand.

I should imagine the great drawback to life at this Agency must be its remoteness and loneliness. Think of that interminable journey to and fro every time you want a summer holiday, and how twenty-four days for a letter from England is considered extraordinarily good going. The English post comes and goes once a week, taking some six days from Harrar, and the chief employment is looking forward to its arrival.

Add to all this that the climate is exceedingly disagreeable, though not, I believe, unhealthy. The days are generally unpleasantly hot and the nights often painfully cold. My thermometer always dropped at least  $40^{\circ}$  in the course of half an hour at sunset, and then a boisterous wind would arise and threaten to blow the tent inside out. It was quite an experience to make my way over the three hundred yards of rough ground which separated my quarters from the dining-room on a pitch dark night, with a gale that always blew out the lantern before I had advanced many steps. Again and again I tripped in a hole and fell headlong.

The various European Legations divide themselves into two camps, French and Russians against English and Italians, and concern themselves with little else than political intrigue. For years the French and Russians had it all their own way, and seemed likely to establish a sphere of influence, if not a direct control. Italy had intended to absorb the country, but her hopeless defeat in a pitched battle compelled her to take with shame the lowest place. Ever since, she has been slowly recovering an influence, and that solely through the tact and discretion of Captain Ciccodicola, her diplomatic representative at Addis Ababa. He has far and away the best, I had almost written the only, house there, and is empowered to spend secret service money lavishly in a country where money is particularly potent. He is viewed with suspicion, of course, but he is fortunate in having the moral support of the British representative, and

feelings of soreness against Italy seem to be passing away. After all, the Abyssinians consider that they conquered not so much one European nation as the representative of all "redskins." And they are always impressed by outward show. To them the palatial Legation, with its succession of luxurious saloons, filled with costly ornaments, pictures, divans, stuffed polar bears, and other marvels, is ever eloquent. How it can all be kept up in a place whither every single thing must be imported laboriously over thousands of miles, by sea and desert, affords a standing wonder. He is also very ingenious in his maintenance of semi-regal state. In his outer courtyard I noticed an array of soldiers carrying guns ostentatiously and wearing caps of curious green and white tartan pattern. There were considerable formalities about taking in my card from the porch. When at last I was bidden into the courtyard, I was solemnly saluted by the soldiers, and one of them crept up into a strange open summer-house to beat a gong.

The French Minister also seeks to impose. I should be sorry to sneer at him personally, for he received me very courteously and is, I am convinced, far too good for his place. Indeed, I have often observed that the most admirable Frenchmen are those who are most remote from republican France. Still, he is the representative of a corrupt and theatrical country, and his point of view is only intelligible to an Englishman by the utmost stretch of indulgence. He persuaded Menelik to create him

Duke of Entotto, and mischievous friends make a point of collecting His Grace's visiting cards. He goes down to the coast stretched out at full length on a litter, and the natives wonder why he "travels like a woman." His Legation is not so fine as that of his Italian colleague, but it is far more pretentious, and covers a great deal more ground.

I passed through a succession of enclosures, each with a zareba wall. In the outer one were a number of tukuls with natives hanging about them. Then I came to a barbaric gateway of mud and thatch with three doors, held open by a long piece of wire. This led to the second yard, planted all round with very small eucalyptus trees. There was a certain sense of tidiness everywhere, most unusual in Addis Ababa. Some native servants motioned me to halt, and one of them took in my card. After a fairly long interval, I was invited to enter. Passing up a narrow yard, bordered by more baby eucalyptus trees, I came upon the Agency, a glorified tukul whitewashed and surmounted with red ninepins. I was shown into a throne-room, which resembled an astrologer's cabinet. Everything was draped in red and blue cotton. The walls formed a background of red covered with stars and lines and other cabalistic designs in blue. A gilt throne with an absurd little chair on either side stood upon a dais beneath a tent-like structure of the favourite red, white, and blue cottonade. By the wall facing the throne was a long row of ordinary cane chairs for the courtiers. A long table, the floor, the ceiling, and the curtain were all swathed



in the same garish stars and stripes. Formerly M. Lagarde used to sit on his throne to receive everybody, even an Englishman, but now he has been laughed out of this and he chats with our countrymen on an equal footing. But with his own republicans, I understand, he still makes use of his throne.

I was left to myself, amid these amusing surroundings, for some minutes. Then one of the astrologer's curtains was moved away from a door and a dapper little Frenchman came in. He received me very politely, and, after asking if I had had a pleasant journey, he looked down at his tweed coat and duck trousers and said he owed me infinite apologies for receiving me in such a garb, but the fact was he intended to go off on a shooting expedition on the morrow. As I was also in tweeds, this was evidently an ingenious reproof to me for not having donned more ceremonious attire. I do not know whether he expected me to put on dress-clothes for an afternoon call, as though he were a sovereign instead of the representative of a republic. I was not going to admit any such claim, so I contented myself with replying that it was very kind of him to receive me at all.

Next day the French Consul came to return my call with the apologies of his chief, who had started on his shooting expedition. This led the conversation on to the subject of sport, and the Consul inquired of Captain Harrington, "Do you ever attempt to shoot a bird flying? Ah, but that is very difficult. That needs great nerve, great presence of mind, great adroit-

ness. I myself prefer to aim at him when he is sitting quietly beside a bush, for then I have a much better chance. But I confess I do not much like going out with M. Lagarde. He is too energetic for me, besides he is so very particular that everything should be done in the approved way. For instance, one day we were after wildfowl round a lake. He remained on one side and I went to the other. As the birds were between us, it was not unnatural that some of my shot should hit him in the leg, but would you believe it? he lost his temper about it, and wanted to lay the blame on me."

The Russians also keep up a great deal of state. I did not see the Minister, who had just lost his wife, an Englishwoman, and was receiving nobody. But as I was travelling up to the capital I met a long procession of Russian soldiers, fair men rigged out in the regular Russian uniform with high peaked caps. I could not imagine what they could possibly be at, but I learned that they were merely escorting a couple of attachés down to Harrar. On the slightest provocation, the Russian officials take out with them huge military retinues, knowing that that is the very best way of impressing the snobbish Abyssinians. Indeed no effort has been spared by the Russian Government to establish an influence in Abyssinia. All sorts of presents have been lavished upon the Emperor, and as an ingenious short cut to popularity with the people a number of Russian doctors have been sent out and a Russian hospital has been built, where the people are attended free of charge.

Perhaps the chief interest in Addis Ababa is afforded by the market, which is most frequented on Saturdays, but also attracts a certain amount of traffic any morning except Sunday, which your Abyssinian observes almost as strictly as your Scot.

Imagine a broad piece of rough ground, approached from a precipitous ravine. Every path or track was



ON THE WAY TO MARKET.

thronged with men, women, and children, going or coming with great loads of merchandise or driving small flocks before them. When Saturday's market hove in sight I was amazed by the density of the mob ; there seemed scarcely a square foot to spare anywhere. Conspicuous above everything and everybody were two bird's-nest constructions, like small haystacks on



stilts. Here squatted officials whose business it was to settle disputes, register sales, and collect tolls.



TWO BIRD'S-NEST CONSTRUCTIONS.

Judging from the clamours of the crowd which surged all round, the proceedings there seemed to be lively.



I discovered at last that the whole place was cut up into rude paths, lined with low hedges of stones, where the sellers had ranged themselves with their wares. As it was impossible to force one's way over a wall without stepping into honey or crockery and generally disarranging the wares of a short-tempered people,



THE REGULATION STRAW-UMBRELLA.  
(Addis Ababa Market.)

enormous circuits were necessary to reach any given point. It was like trying to take a short cut in a maze. Most people carried the regulation straw umbrella of Abyssinia, which cannot be closed, which is carried in all weathers rather as a badge than as a protection, and which always reminds me of Robinson Crusoe. Many men wore very

gaudy straw hats with brilliant ribbons twisted in and out. I remarked to a man at random, "Where did you get that hat?" and he replied, "I made it myself."

As in Oriental bazaars, as in mediæval England, the various departments of trade cling together. Here were all the purveyors of cheap imported wares, which seemed indeed to predominate in the market: tin cans, enamelled pots and pans, very thin Indian silks, coarse cloths, garish chromo-lithographs of religious subjects. There had been a better set out in a suburban fair at home. Dirty pots of slimy honey covered an unduly large area; very unappetising it looked, and I was told it must be boiled and strained of dead bees before even an Abyssinian will discuss it. A few mangy skins, leopards' for the most part, were held aloft like flags to attract buyers' attention. They were cheap enough, but as they had all been cut for wear over a native's shoulder, they did not tempt me very much. A street was thronged with armourers, the favourite weapon being a long, curved sword, known as the dervish. I was tempted by one of unusual length, but the unpractical tradesman had no scabbard for it ready-made. The hilts are usually sold separately according to taste.

The jewellery department was chiefly presided over by women, who are reputed even harder bargainers than the men in Abyssinia. They had so little variety, and that so vastly inferior to what I had already found at Harrar, that I went away pursewhole. Silver and

brass are the favourite metals. Nor were there any novelties in the way of spears and shields. I had hoped to find, as at Nijni-Novgorod, examples of all the most curious produce of the empire. But nearly all the wares were purely local, as was, after all, to be expected in a country where communications are so sparsely developed.



MULE MARKET, ADDIS ABABA.

Cattle, horses, mules, and donkeys, each had their separate department. Abdi secured some fine horned sheep for the return journey, and I was minded to do a deal in donkeys. They carry nearly as much as mules, and are reputed to cost only eight or ten shillings apiece, and I reflected that it would be much cheaper to buy them and sell them again

rather than hire so many mules. However, I found I could get nothing worth having under a pound, and my attempts at bargaining were firmly refused.

Abdi begged me very hard to buy a horse, to be ridden alternately by him and the cook and any one who might fall ill. He assured me I could get a very fine piece of horseflesh for £2, which was one-half or one-third of the price of a mule. I let him conduct me to the local Tattersall, where a number of Abyssinians were galloping long-tailed animals furiously up and down an open space to tempt the unwary. I pointed to two whose paces attracted me, and, ascertaining that I might have either for £3 with his harness, I told him to have them sent to the British Agency for inspection by Captain Harrington's groom. Alas! one of them proved to have a wall eye and the other's back was hopelessly sore. Evidently horse-dealing is much the same all the world over.

I talked a good deal with Captain Harrington about the preservation of big game, which has lately been arousing a good deal of interest on the conclusion of an international convention. He feels very strongly on the subject, remarking that Somaliland, the best sporting country in the world, is practically a preserve for Englishmen. Regulations have to be enforced or all the game would be killed off. So, too, in Abyssinia. The law is that the first tusk which touches the ground belongs to the Emperor, but practically he expects to receive both tusks, and any Englishmen who come out to shoot elephants will now offer him all the ivory they take. In the case of a party of sportsmen



who passed through last winter, the Emperor allowed each member to take home a couple of tusks to show what the country can produce, but Captain Harrington exacted their word of honour that they would not take more.

Sportsmen must go several days' journey away to find anything worth shooting, and really the only object of interest within easy access of Addis Ababa is the old capital of Entotto, a pleasant place for a picnic amid the forlorn remains of the old palace. So complete and extensive a set of ruins less than ten years old is probably an unique spectacle, though, judging by the darkness of the stones, they might easily be hundreds of years old.

When I reached Addis Ababa I was told that I had come at a very inopportune moment if I wanted to see the Emperor Menelik. He was now particularly friendly towards English people, but, owing to a recent indiscretion, he had a wholesome dread of any one however remotely connected with the press.

Hearing this, I had very small hopes of being favoured with an audience, particularly as I only arrived on a Saturday, and His Majesty was announced to be starting on a journey of several months on the following Tuesday. However, the Emperor's sympathy for Englishmen prevailed, and I was informed that I should be received at 4.30 on the Monday afternoon. Menelik's habit is to fix audiences for five or six in the morning, as he transacts most of his business in the small hours, but he makes an exception in favour of English

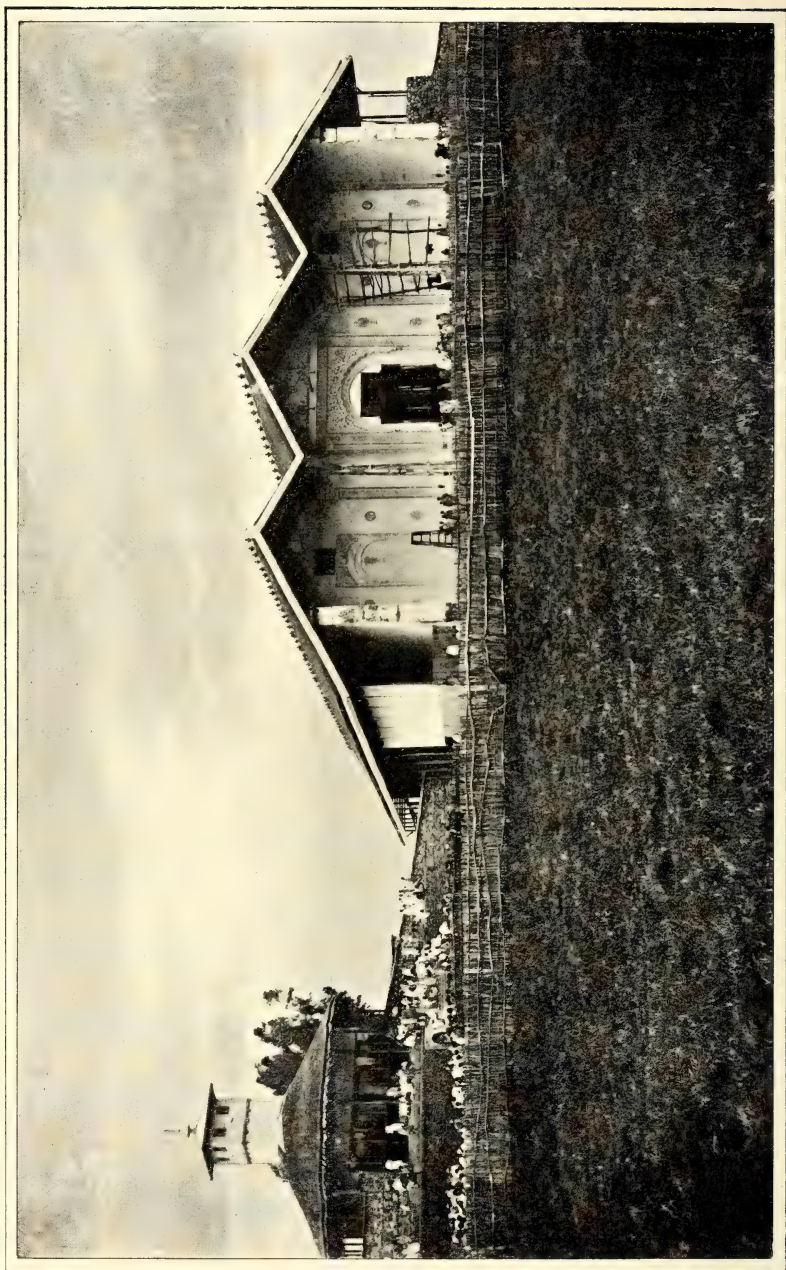
people, having gathered from Captain Harrington's habits that we are not such early risers.

I set out with the interpreter of the Legation, an Abyssinian educated at Beyrouth, who rode a white horse with a fine long tail, and wore amazing long yellow boots, a blue jacket, a flannel shirt, and a great air of horsey importance. I rode my sorry mule and felt rather incongruous in dress clothes, pumps, and a khaki helmet. If it would not have been irreverent, I could almost have laughed at myself. However, the Negus makes a great point of it that Europeans shall come to him in dress-clothes.

The Ghebi (Palace) enclosure is walled in by a high zareba of thick sticks with brambles tied to the middle. After skirting this for a long way, we found a door some five or six feet wide. Out of this all manner of people and horses were streaming, in preparation for the sovereign's departure on the morrow. There was an abrupt ascent to the door and a big log of wood to cross. We found ourselves in an oblong courtyard, with a rough, flagged path in the centre and long native buildings on either side. All sorts of people were lounging about, many squatting in corners and others bustling with water jars, provision baskets, &c. Many women with loaves were preparing to follow the cavalcade which I met on my way, carrying portions of Menelik's tent for his first camping-place on the morrow.

Another doorway led into another courtyard, where many similar people were bustling about. We seemed to ascend from courtyard to courtyard interminably.





BANQUETING HALL OF MENELIK'S PALACE WHERE 2,000 WARRIORS EAT RAW MEAT TOGETHER.

(Photo by P. Mathieu.)

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At length we were begged to dismount, and we made our way on foot through another doorway into another courtyard, which was much larger than any which had preceded it. On our left was a pagoda-like building with open wooden arches and woodwork carved like the shutters of a harem. This was the approach to Menelik's pavilion, a gimcrack wooden edifice with many feeble columns and verandahs covered with faded paintings, altogether suggestive of worn-out scenery. At the front of a kind of stage overlooking the courtyard was a very black Abyssinian, leaning back in his chair, exhibiting the usual feminine vanity, and talking with the usual high-pitched voice, which are the two most striking characteristics of Abyssinians.

The Master of the Horse, whom I had already met at the British Agency, came running down the steps and shook hands with us. He went off to tell His Majesty that we had arrived, and we retired into the shade of the other side of the courtyard with a man who was carrying a box of presents from Captain Harrington and myself. Behind us was the Hall of Justice, a circular building, where the Emperor appears on a verandah and decides any legal cases that may be submitted to him. On our right, below the courtyard where we were standing, was the long banqueting hall, where 10,000 Abyssinians are feasted with raw meat on grand occasions. We waited about twenty minutes, and then at last we were summoned. We passed through the Hall of Audience, where I espied an enormous satin pillow, on which the

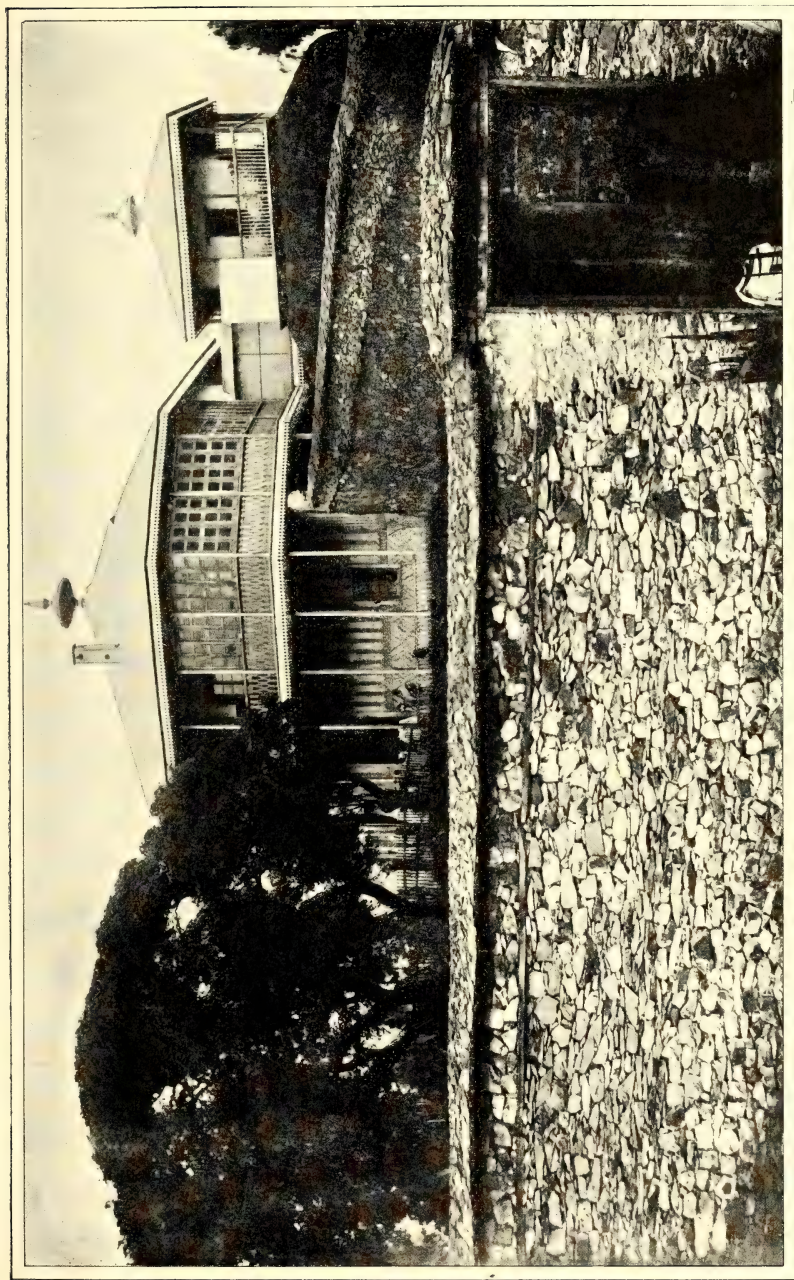
Emperor seats himself to receive the representatives of foreign Powers ; up some grass terraces and paved steps ; up an unfinished circular tower staircase, from which a kind of bridge led to Menelik's



MENELIK.

private verandah, entered by a double door of slate blue.

I could see the Negus sitting on a cane chair cross-legged some seconds before I reached the presence. A number of common-looking Abyssinians were



THE IMPERIAL PAVILION.  
(Photo by P. Mathieu.)

[To face page 196.]





lounging about, saying and doing nothing. There was nothing to distinguish them, not even a little extra cleanliness, from ordinary Abyssinian peasants. A small grandson with a scrofulous head, dingy clothes, and bare feet, held on to the back of the Emperor's chair all through my audience. In the background were a number of painted panels. On one of these I noticed a peacock above, a vase of flowers in the middle, and a white horse below; on another a cock, some flowers, and an elephant. They were all gaudy and badly done, but the horse was worst of all.

There was no ceremony of introduction. The only movement Menelik made was to hold out his hand to me. I had discussed the question of kissing it with various people, and the Russians in particular had been very firm in impressing upon me how ignoble it would be for a white man thus to demean himself before a black. I have, however, been brought up to reverence sovereigns, so I bent down and pressed my lips to the hand of the descendant of the Queen of Sheba. He appeared surprised, and said "Um—m" in a tone which expressed unexpected satisfaction.

"When did you arrive?" he began, but did not wait for an answer, the more particularly because he knew very well, being kept constantly informed of the movements of every European within his dominions. He went on to ask the interpreter a variety of questions about me, but gave him no time to translate them. Then he motioned me to a chair similar to his own immediately facing him.

I had noticed that his eye kept wandering to the box of presents, which a servant from the British Agency had brought with us. Now he looked straight at it as though to inquire what we had there. The interpreter took the hint, and the box was brought forward. It had been an anxious question to know what would be the best present for me to bring. It is etiquette to bring something, and probably has been etiquette in Ethiopia for thousands of years. Your present is regarded in the nature of tribute, and the monarch does not feel that any one puts him under an obligation by anything that may be brought. I had been warned not to commit the mistake of French visitors who bring toys, which he regards as a suggestion that he is either a child or a savage. So I congratulated myself on my ingenuity in thinking of a Mauser pistol, as I knew that His Majesty was interested both in firearms and in mechanical novelties. Unfortunately, however, I discovered that everybody had been bringing him a Mauser pistol ever since the invention of that ingenious weapon. My offering was further discounted by the fact that the British Minister had chosen this occasion to send him a case of a newer and more surprising kind of pistol, which is loaded through the stock. Menelik had never seen this before, and he displayed great interest when it was explained to him, grasping the intricacies of the mechanism with a readiness which amazed me. For several minutes he kept adjusting the sights, taking aim at various points of the verandah and going through the motions of

loading. I could not help being amused at the sort of struggle which went on all the time between him and the interpreter as to who should hold the pistol and push the cartridges in. One of them would snatch at it and seem to say, "No, that's not right. Here, give it to me ; I'll show you." Then the other would grab at it as if to protest, "No, you don't understand at all. Let me show you. There, that's the way it ought to be done."

My modest Mauser, coming after these novelties, was naturally rather at a discount, but Menelik's kindly politeness passed it off. He drew it an inch out of the case, which also acts as the stock, peered at it, and said "Es-shi" with quite a show of emphasis before passing it on to an attendant to take away to his armoury. This word "Es-shi" is always being used by every class of Abyssinians, and may mean almost anything from "All right," to "Thank you very much indeed."

Presently he asked me what my profession was, how long I intended to stay, how old I was, and various other things which did not lead to anything in the way of conversation. In the presence of other monarchs I have always understood that I was never to initiate a topic, but wait to be spoken to, and wait until I was sent away. This, however, does not seem to be exacted at the Court of the Negus. Presently there was a lull in the conversation, and the interpreter inquired if there was anything I wished to ask the King. I said I should be glad of permission to visit the monasteries and churches of his

empire. Menelik replied that there was no objection to my seeing them, and that, if I anticipated any difficulty, he would give orders that no one should stop me anywhere. He then volunteered to give me a special pass for my return journey to Harrar. This I rather coveted, as it would have had the Great Seal of the Lion of Judah upon it, but owing either to the laziness of officials or to the carelessness of the interpreter it never reached me.

There was another pause, and as I was evidently expected to make conversation I remarked that people in England took an extreme interest in Ethiopia. I was rather pleased with my thoughtfulness in using the word Ethiopia, as he would have noticed and disliked Abyssinia, which implies mongrel. He smiled amiably at my remark, and replied that it confirmed his own impression; that he was glad to see this interest manifested by the visits of so many Englishmen; that it was only by learning to know each other that we could arrive at a real understanding.

I then asked if he would be graciously pleased to transmit through me a message to the English people, who always regarded him with feelings of sincere friendship.

“Tell them,” said His Majesty, “that I have always desired their friendship and support, because I know that I may trust them. Other people often tell me things which I find out afterwards are not true, or they promise things and do not perform them. But when an Englishman says anything to me I



know that I can believe him ; when he promises anything, it is as good as done. Tell your people that I shall always be pleased to see them, whenever any of them care to undertake the long journey to my capital."

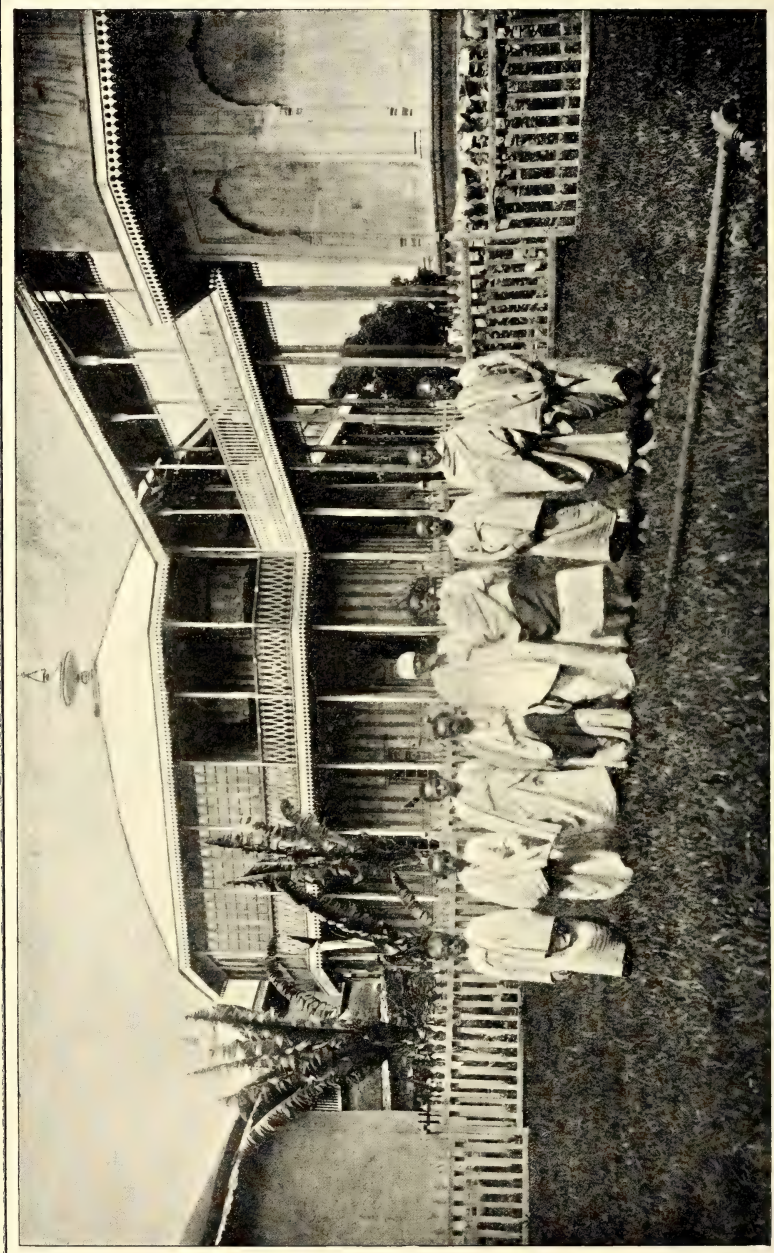
I said that it would give the English people vast pleasure if at any time he were disposed to come among them. He smiled and his eyes glistened for a moment, but presently a shadow of melancholy passed over his countenance.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "I have long desired to see your wonderful country. I have heard much of your ships and your manufactures and your inventions. You have also fine horses and dogs, some of which have recently made their way hither. But a sovereign owes a duty to his people, and cannot, alas ! leave them for any length of time, however many interesting sights may tempt him outside. I believe that if I went to England I should find many useful things, by bringing which to this country much good might be done. You know I have already constructed a telephone from Harrar. Perhaps one day we shall have a railway. But if I once began to travel, there are so many places which I should desire to visit. There is India, for instance. I believe I could spend many pleasant months in exploring its wonders. I am told that the elephants there have been trained to do work just as if they were asses or mules. We have many elephants here, but no one has ever tamed them. Think of the intelligence of an elephant. What might it not be taught to do !"

I will attempt to convey an impression of Menelik. When I came in he was sitting well back in his chair with his legs crossed, toying with a coloured silk handkerchief, which he handed to an attendant. What I first noticed was that he wore clean bright blue woollen socks and new tennis shoes of a common kind, with the tongues hanging out and no laces. Over close-fitting white linen knickerbockers came a loose garment of handsome green and gold striped silk. It had long, tight sleeves buttoned at the wrists, and when he moved his legs I saw that the garment was lined with common calico. Under it he wore a white shamma with a red embroidered line near the edge, and over everything a black silk cloak with gold embroidery and small gilt buttons. On his head was a white cloth tied very tightly and surmounted by a big grey felt hat with a high crown and broad brim. In his left ear was a diamond solitaire earring, about the size of a threepenny-bit and set in gold. This is worn in evidence of his having killed elephants, and only the royal family are permitted to wear gold in any form. On the little finger of his left hand was a thick ring, with a dark blue stone and two diamonds set gipsy fashion.

His face is not so much marked with smallpox as I had been led to expect. He is darker than the average Abyssinian, but his features are not those of a negro. His mouth, however, is quite negroid, and his thick lips wear an incessant grin, displaying large, very white teeth set loosely together. His small brown eyes wore an expression of fatigue, and what





VERANDAH OF MENELIK'S PALACE, WITH A GROUP OF COURTIERS.

(Photo by P. Mathieu.)

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should be the whites of them were yellow. His forehead is narrow, but the upper part of his face appears to have much character and kindliness. His beard and whiskers are very close and curly and inclined to be grey. His voice is soft and rather oily, without any vestige of the usual Abyssinian squeak. He speaks very deliberately, showing his teeth and tongue and wagging his head a good deal. He makes no gesticulations with his hands, except that sometimes he puts the finger-tips together. On the whole I should describe his as rather an ecclesiastical manner. Throughout the whole of my audience he impressed me as being gentle and easy-going, but once, when the interpreter asked leave to say a few words in private on behalf of Captain Harrington, his expression changed with extraordinary rapidity. The smile died away, the easy carelessness was no longer to be seen, and his eyes lit up with a shrewd, sharp expression.

He motioned the courtiers to move away, and they all retired to the end of the verandah, but not so far off that they may not have heard something. The interpreter bent forward and lowered his voice, and I caught the word *Leontieff* more than once. The Emperor grew grave at once, and began to argue with some eagerness. I understand that it was the question of the flags, which the adventurer had removed from British territory, and that Menelik now authorised Mr. Harrison's expedition to set them up again. Captain Harrington would have been with me to discuss this question himself, but

he was unfortunately laid up with an attack of influenza.

At last, when my audience had lasted over forty minutes, I rose and bade the interpreter express my sense of the honour which His Majesty had done me. He replied very graciously that he was glad to see me, and that if I desired anything at any time I was to let him know.

There is a suggestion of hilarity about the title of Negus. I should not, however, attribute to its present holder a particularly hilarious temperament. He is always ready to smile, and I daresay he has a certain sense of humour, but very few people have heard him laugh, though many things must have occurred during recent years to amuse him enormously, not the least among them the way in which the French and Russians habitually grovel to him.

He has had little or no education according to our sense of the term. Indeed, no one in Abyssinia ever does get any education beyond learning to read and write and quote passages from the Gospels. There are no schools in Abyssinia, and what little teaching exists is undertaken by the priests in the courtyards of the round churches. Perhaps, however, the best education of all is that which comes from observation, and it cannot be denied that Menelik has exercised his intelligence in that way to some purpose. For instance, when he received a friend of mine the other day and gave him permission to start off in pursuit of ibex in the north of Abyssinia, he seemed to know all about it, and sent at once for a book containing a

picture of the animal. He had also heard of the Himalayas, and had a very good idea of the part of India where they are to be found, although he has probably never set eyes upon a map.

Every one who knows him is also agreed about his kindness and consideration. One day, when he saw a party of Englishmen in danger of being hustled by the crowd at the gates of the Palace, he ordered way to be made for them, and begged them to ride in immediately before him.

Of course there are people who run down Menelik. Even the greatest and wisest and best have their detractors. The most vindictive person I met was a member of what I have called the young Abyssinia party, but his opinions had to be discounted considerably, for he was a man with a grievance. He had been cast into prison, he said, by Menelik's direct order, until he paid an exorbitant fine. But there are always two sides to every story, and as I have only heard one side of this one, I am in no hurry to accept it.

Other stories came to me from an European resident, about whom I will only say that he is not an Englishman. The Abyssinian method, said he, is to take all that can be got. It is accordingly unsafe to bring a good gun into Addis Ababa, lest Menelik should seize it and ask what you want for it. You might reply that it was not for sale, but he would keep it and ask your price again. If at length you said it cost you \$200, he might send you thirty, and you might be thankful to get that. Before

believing this story I should require a great deal of evidence in corroboration of it. At present I have none.

Here is another story from the same source. Some years ago Menelik ordered a mill from a Frenchman, having first asked the price and been told \$20,000. By the time the mill came intriguers told Menelik that it was only worth \$3,000. Menelik had it put up at a place where it could not possibly work. When the Frenchman asked for payment, Menelik refused, saying in any case the mill could only be worth \$3,000, and as it would not work it was worth nothing at all. Then the following altercation ensued: "\$20,000 were promised, and it would work if it were put up in its proper place." "Very well, put it up for me in the proper place, and then we will see." "But I only agreed to deliver the mill and not to put it up, and it would cost me \$10,000 to remove it to the proper site."

Some years later, when Menelik was away at the Italian war, the Frenchman came to Ras Makonnen, who was acting as Regent, and begged for part payment to save him from bankruptcy, whereupon the Regent gave him \$5,000. A few months ago Menelik came across this entry in the accounts and was furious. He demanded instant reimbursement, and when the man refused this he sent 2,000 soldiers to blockade his house in Addis Ababa. The man appealed to M. Lagarde, the French Minister, urging that this would be bad for French prestige. The Minister replied that he could not trouble about



commercial people: he only cared about political questions. Two friends guaranteed the \$5,000, and at last Menelik gave \$2,000 more to terminate the affair.

The most plausible part of this story is the conduct of the French representative, but as for the mill, I should be more inclined to accept the Emperor's estimate of it than that of a French adventurer. In any case, it was natural that when a dusky potentate found that some one had sold him a mill which he could not use, he should be in no hurry to pay for it.

Here is another story, which I have from an unimpeachable source, and which I commend to the attention of Russian adventurers. Some years ago a Russian bandmaster arrived at Addis Ababa, having been partly subsidised by his Government, which provided instruments, &c. With infinite patience and difficulty he taught a score of Abyssinians to play the chief national anthems of the world and such popular airs as "After the Ball." He expected to make a very good thing out of it, but he contrived to displease the Emperor and left Addis Ababa penniless. The band now plays fairly well on all grand occasions, and one of the favourite tunes of His Majesty is an Ethiopian anthem, which was composed by the unfortunate bandmaster.

All sorts of absurd stories go the rounds about Menelik whenever the French or Italian papers are hard up for something to invent. Among the latest yarns, we are told that he and his Empress had taken

to riding bicycles in the grounds of the Palace. To any one who has seen these "grounds," this is sufficiently ludicrous, apart from the fact that the Empress Taitu weighs twenty stone and



TAITU.

measures sixty inches round the waist. It was also alleged that he had forbidden the use of tobacco under pain of cutting off the offender's tongue and lips, because he had tried the weed himself and it had made him very sick. As a matter of fact he

does not smoke, but he has no objection to other people doing so, and I know of one case in which he invited an Englishman to light a cigar in his presence.

The Emperor's life is a very simple one. He rises in the small hours and transacts business during the greater part of the day, attending to all the minutest details himself. His repasts are very frugal, and consist of little else than bread and more or less raw meat, washed down by tej, the mead or honey-wine of the country. From time to time he starts out on long progresses through his dominions, accompanied by a vast army. He has two large and by no means uncomfortable tents, one of which is always sent a day's march in advance. He generally sleeps in the middle of the day and transacts business again far into the night. His chief interest is in mechanical contrivances, about which he has almost the knowledge of a specialist. He employs a large number of spies, and is said to have an extraordinary memory.

The Empress Taitu is a very proud woman, enormously sensible of her high position. She belongs to the old school, opposes all innovations and mistrusts all foreigners. She received Captain Harrington, however, very graciously not long ago, and when he gave her Queen Victoria's photograph she rose from her seat and made a deep bow, much to his surprise. Presently she asked him how many children Queen Victoria had had, and whether they were all by the same husband.

## Chapter VIII

### THE ABYSSINIANS AT HOME

The Jewry of Africa—Greetings—A Vocabulary for Travellers—  
Groveling—Snobs—Insults—Free-and-Easy Manners—Gluttony—Feudal Retainers—Leechcraft—Gifts—Voices—Costume—Games—Music—Dancing—Chattering—Gallas—Dusky Damsels—At the Wells—In the Fields—Perambulators—Good Looks—Hairdressing—Dirt—Marriage.

ABYSSINIA has been called the Switzerland of Africa, but I should be more inclined to dub it her Scotland, for nowhere else may such canniness be discerned. At the same time the untiring industry of the Swiss and the Scots is utterly absent, and perhaps the best name of all would be the Jewry of Africa. The intrusion of civilisation amid an ancient people is usually objectionable, for it rubs off that bloom which is their most transcendent charm. But here the bloom is already gone. The Abyssinians are not a simple people, and they are only too anxious to work out their own civilisation. Even their limited advance has already resulted in corruption, vandalism, and chicanery. It affords one more instance of the danger of a little knowledge. Educating Africans is even worse than educating the masses, as the French will one day learn to their cost in Tunisia.

Abyssinians are not popular with those who have



made their acquaintance, and they are certainly irritating, if only by their squeaky voices, their insolence, and their greed. It is, however, only fair to say that there does exist an old-fashioned party, which clings to old patriarchal customs and discourages all intimacy with white folk. With these the traveller does not often come in contact, for they do not seek his society. The Empress Taitu and the Garasmach of Harrar are prominent members of this party.

My first sight of Abyssinians on the way up gave me a favourable but I believe wholly incorrect idea of their character. The Somalis I had passed made no pretence at a greeting, but merely shouted information hoarsely to one another. Here, on the other hand, were people wearing Christian hats and women clad in a sort of blue muslin, which gave a faint, faraway suggestion of nuns. "De naderk" (Good-day), "De naderashu" (Good-day to you), and other exclamations were volunteered with a certain heartiness and many profound inclinations. Indeed the Abyssinian salutation always moved me to much merriment. It was as though a man tried very hard to roll himself up into a ball. He would plunge his head rapidly forward and describe a circle in the air almost like a man about to dive. His head having approached as near as possible to his feet, he would leap back into an erect position. Meanwhile his very long curved sword in its bright red leathern scabbard would be darting violently into the air and reminding me ludicrously of a monkey's tail. Indeed the more I came to know the Abyssinians the more irre-

sistibly did they recall monkeys. They seem to know this themselves, for they are extremely sensitive on the subject. *Gingero-ullach*, offspring of monkeys, is a recognised term of insult among them, and one which I found very useful when I wished to annoy them. For the convenience of travellers I may also mention *karkero-ullach*, son of a pig; *gummatam-ullach*, a very useful word, which I should find it difficult to translate; *emsi bakish*, a rude invitation to depart; *ante laba*, you are a thief; and *anta hid*, go and be blowed.

Such politeness as they possess is utterly superficial and only assumed for an object. Sometimes they will grovel to a contemptible degree. When I was staying with Captain Harrington, I would see an Abyssinian approach the drawing-room to lodge a grievance, and he rarely omitted to kiss the carpet at the edge of the tent both at the beginning and the end of his interview. Sometimes, in still deeper humility, he would kiss the dust outside the carpet at the entrance. I have also seen Abyssinians kiss the boots of an European in an outburst of that sense of favours to come, which is so highly developed among them. This, however, is quite the exception in the average manner of an Abyssinian. Particularly in the presence of his compatriots, he loves to parade his equality with and even superiority to Europeans. His great delight is to lead them on, by a series of neglect, petty annoyances, and waste of precious time, to lose their tempers. Then he is vastly delighted and indeed amused.

The Abyssinians are essentially snobs. They will be much more polite and affable to any one they consider rich and powerful than to those who make no display. They measure the respect due to anybody by the number of his retinue, and it is the custom among them to go everywhere with as many servants as they can scrape together. In Addis Ababa people go out shopping or visiting with nearly their whole household running along beside their mules. I observed this characteristic when I was on the march. If I had all my servants round me, every peasant I met hastened to efface himself, even though he had to drive his baggage animals into a thicket or a ditch. When I rode on fast by myself and suffered my attendants to lag behind, I found I was treated very differently. Men with donkeys or camels, women with loads of hay or wood, travellers with a gun and a spear would strut straight at me and expect me to make way. They would even indulge sometimes in impertinent chaff, either asking me whether I wanted a servant—this I knew by catching the word *askari*—or else repeating in unmistakably insulting tones, “Ali, Ali, Ali.”

This it seems has been in vogue as an insult to Europeans ever since the battle of Adowa. The word is a common Muhammadan name, and the Italians having had many servants called Ali at Massowah, took to applying it to every native indiscriminately, just as some foolish folk call every soldier Tommy and every agricultural labourer Hodge. After they had conquered the Italians, the Abyssinians thought

it would be amusing to turn the tables, so they took to addressing every Italian thus, and, as they realise very little difference between an Italian and any other European, extended the nickname to all *ferenjis*. Seeing that this was disliked, they persisted in it, not in a spirit of good-humour and chaff, but intending a deliberate insult. I was unaware of this until I read Count Gleichen's book at Addis Ababa and how he had punished some Abyssinian soldiers for using this word to him. I daresay many people may have called me Ali on my way up, but if they did I should not have minded what I did not understand. On the way down I heard the expression twice, once from a group of women, for whom there was no answer except to comment upon their surprising ugliness in languages which they did not understand. The other time was near the end of my last march back to Harrar. In a narrow path between high hedges of candelabra cactus I encountered several men in charge of some fifty small donkeys. I was several hundred yards in front of my servants, and the donkeymen accordingly took no trouble to assist me, so I had to do all the shouting and beating myself to force a passage through the crowd of animals. When I had done this I found the men bringing up the rear, and they made no sign of moving aside to let me pass. Indeed one of them danced about in front of my mule, and shouted "Ali, Ali, Ali." I raised my whip as though to strike him, imagining he would at once move aside, but instead of doing that he raised his hand to mock my gesture, and went on



repeating with increasing insolence, "Ali, Ali, Ali." I lashed him three times across each side of his face with the thong of my whip, and for a moment I thought there was going to be a general attack from the men. But one of them espied my servants coming up, so it was decided that discretion was the better part of valour, and I was allowed to proceed, saying "*Gummatamullach*" but not goodbye.

It was specially at Harrar that I was impressed by the free-and-easy manners of the Abyssinians. When I was calling upon a merchant one day, I found that all sorts of natives would stroll into the room without any formality, proceed to pick up and examine anything that excited their curiosity, help themselves to a biscuit or a cigarette without so much as "by your leave," and all this in the most natural way in the world, like a child or a monkey. As an observant Frenchman remarked to me, the Abyssinians get on very well among themselves, but are intolerable to strangers. They are crafty, the enemies of all restraint, most especially of that imposed by work, as mischievous and impudent as the street-boys of Paris, gluttonous to the last degree, and hopelessly impractical at any serious pinch. I may mention what happened at the British Agency at Addis Ababa, when one of the tukuls caught fire. Everybody assembled at once, and soon an enormous crowd was yelling for ropes and water, but no one thought of going to fetch them himself, though they were close at hand.

My two most lingering impressions of the Abys-

sinians are the smell of the rancid butter with which they all pomade their hair, and the sight of the ridiculous straw umbrellas, shaped like that of Robinson Crusoe in a pantomime, which are paraded everywhere without any regard to the weather.

What is specially to be observed among the Abyssinians is the way in which they cling to feudal traditions. Every one has as many retainers as possible, who live with him and eat with him as members of his family. The older men eat first, then the younger men, then the women, then the men-servants, and finally the female servants. When a man visits you with his retainers and you give him a bumper, he leaves part in his glass and passes it on to his servants. Everybody has a professional taster. Before the master eats or drinks, this man goes through the formality of tasting. For instance, he will pour a few drops of tej into his hand and lap it. Every retainer has his own duties, and will under no circumstances consent to do any others at all. In a big household one man looks after the tej and nothing else, another concerns himself only with the guns, another is merely treasurer, another has charge of certain animals. In fact there is an infinite subdivision of labour. Even a small man never goes out of doors without four retainers to accompany him. One carries his gun, another his sword, another his purse, and the fourth, like the man in the *Chanson de Malbrook*, carries nothing at all. They are all consulted about all sorts of matters, such as, for instance, the purchase of a hat for the master.

Under no circumstances will they consent to carry parcels. If you take a man out with you, buy a small thing and hand it him to carry, he calls a coolie at once. He will carry your gun and as many cartridges as is physically possible, but not a bottle or a roll of cloth. The rule is not to pay retainers, except when they travel; at home they have their food and a couple of cloths every year. Not long ago even Europeans obtained servants under these conditions, but now they have to pay about \$6 a month if they reside at Harrar, and a great deal more if they travel across country.

There are practically no arts, professions, or manufactures in Abyssinia. The only approach to any is a certain fantastic old-world skill in leechcraft and surgery. The native bone-setters enjoy a certain reputation. A friend of mine was walking along the awful streets of Harrar one evening when his ankle suddenly gave way without any apparent cause. He was helped home, and during three months an Italian doctor and a Greek chemist tried every sort of prescription in vain. At last some one said, "You had better consult one of the native bone-setters." He said he would try anything rather than remain in pain; so the bone-setter came and touched the ankle gently but firmly with the tips of his fingers. There was great agony for a moment, but thenceforward my friend gradually recovered. Every day the bone-setter used to come and kneel down in the billiard-room after lunch with a saucer of oil beside him; my friend would place his foot upon a stool and a process of native massage

would go on for about half an hour. The man was amiable and amusing, and used to keep us all merry with his quips. Indeed it was he who taught me my very fine vocabulary of Abyssinian abuse. I am told that on another occasion he was equally successful in curing a Frenchman who had put his shoulder out. The Abyssinians have also a number of strange drugs, which are unknown to the European pharmacopeia and merit investigation. Kat enables men to go without food or drink for four days, another herb is infallible for sore eyes, ophthalmia, &c., and another for dysentery. Mine host of the "Lion" suffered from dysentery for thirty-six days and tried the usual European remedies in vain; he was given some of this herb, and recovered completely in thirty-six hours.

It is perhaps in their ideas about gifts that the Abyssinians reveal their character most clearly. It is said of them that they are in the habit of giving you an egg in the expectation of receiving an ox in return. Wherever I went I came across instances of this, but it was all done so openly that I could not feel annoyed. At Minnabella, for instance, some peasants brought me a chicken and a basket of eggs. I consulted with my cook as to what present I should make in return, and we agreed upon a bar of salt, which is legal tender as a quarter of a dollar. This the peasants refused, saying that they had brought a present for their greatest friend and desired nothing in return. Reggel, the cook, burst into a roar of ribald laughter and explained this to mean that one



salt was not enough. So he asked my leave to give them two. These were accepted, but were presently brought back with the reiteration that money was not wanted: the chicken and eggs were a gift. At last, however, we compounded for a few lumps of sugar in addition to the salt.

The Italian Minister at Addis Ababa told me he was bothered all day and every day by presents of this kind. A man would bring four eggs, worth one-tenth of the salt, and seem to expect a gun in return, and as the Minister was anxious to make himself as popular as possible in the country, he had no easy task to get rid of them. This I can well understand, for your Abyssinian is terribly persistent in refusing to take no for an answer. Often a man would bring a basket of loaves to my camp; I would thank him and tell him I had plenty of bread; he would reply "Never mind, it is a gift." I would thank him again and repeat that I had plenty of bread; then finally he would say that he would really be content with a very small present in return. The Abyssinians are not, however, alone in this habit. When I reached Gildessa, the new head of the camelmen presented me with two sheep, three fowls, a basket of eggs, and a tin pan of milk fresh from the cow. I was new to the business then, and thought I was making a sufficient return by agreeing to a slightly enhanced price for the camels. However, just as I was about to depart, he sent word that I had not paid him for his present and I was obliged to produce some more dollars.

Two more characteristics linger persistently in my memory. One is the shrill, penetrating voice, which is extremely irritating, but has the advantage of carrying a very long way ; Abyssinians can shout whole conversations at incredible distances, seeming to have solved instinctively the problem of the wireless telephone. The other is the very slight difference in dress and appearance between the sexes. Their costume consisted in either case of a large dingy sheet, and their hair was similarly plastered with a wealth of rancid butter. Again and again when a young man or a young woman approached my camp I would ask my Somalis what was the intruder's sex, and I was pleased to find that I was very rarely alone in my ignorance, for they would nearly always grin and shrug their shoulders as they replied, " Allah knows, sah'b."

Both Somalis and Abyssinians are nearly as fond of a game as any Englishman can be, and, in spite of their inherent conservatism, they are always ready to adopt any which they may come across. At Aden it was the commonest thing in the world to see small Somalis playing football with an empty cocoanut, attempting cricket on the shore with the most rudimentary materials, and giving themselves up to the delights of a variety of hockey. At Zaila they have a game of their own, which would seem to possess some faraway common ancestry with several of our own sports. Any evening on the village common you may see a great concourse of natives playing at ball. They divide themselves according to their

tribes or villages, and a ball is thrown from one tribe to another. If it be dropped, the man who has dropped it must run away as fast as he can, while the members of the tribe who threw it hasten to pick it up and pursue him. If they can strike him with the ball before he reaches the boundary a point is counted to them, but if they fail, one of them must throw the ball back into the crowd and run away in



SOMALIS PLAYING AT BALL.

*(Photograph by CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.)*

his turn. As they are exceedingly good shots and swift runners the sport is often exciting.

They and the Abyssinians pride themselves equally on their adroitness in throwing a javelin, which is weighted with a ball of lead at the tail. It is not difficult to throw after a fashion, but to attain to the extreme precision of the natives requires practice almost throughout a lifetime. An expert can rely

upon it as though it were a rifle, and a young brave has no hesitation in setting out to meet a lion or even an elephant with no other arm. For better security he carries two or three extra weapons, but it is not often that these are needed. If he could have an unlimited supply he would be almost a match for an enemy armed with inferior guns at close quarters. There is also a game called gouks, which is very popular among the Abyssinians. The players divide into two parties on horseback and chase each other, throwing long staves like spears. They are very adroit and often inflict nasty knocks. On the occasion of a great festival the Emperor or a Ras generally sets the game going by throwing the first staff.

There are also a variety of sedentary games among both nations. I would often see my Somalis crouching over little holes they had scooped out in the sand, and moving about a number of pebbles from one to the other. The game seemed a cross between draughts and knucklebones, and excited a great deal of interest, for the players would go on by the hour, and many others would gather round to watch them. I believe this was a simple variety of the game of gabatta, which seems to be of Arab origin and has made its way in Abyssinia. It has a regular board, made either of wood or pottery, and consists of two sets of nine holes or hollows for each of two players. These holes are called tukuls (the native summer-house), and each contains three marbles at the beginning of the game. How



they pass about from one tukul to another, and why they are thrown up into the air from time to time, I did not succeed in learning.

For the rest, Abyssinian forms of diversion are not peculiar, consisting chiefly of fantasias, which an Arab would despise heartily, bonfires, the slaughter of cattle, and an inordinate consumption of raw meat, which induces a peculiarly loathsome disease.

The music is even more monotonous than any I have ever heard in any part of the East. There are a strange old barbarous lyre and violin which seem to have no bass notes at all, a flute even more shrill and unmusical than flutes usually are, and a long, weird trumpet, called imbilta, which suggests in appearance the instruments used for blowing down the walls of Jericho, with none of the sonorousness due from a trumpet. The only contrast is afforded by the big drums, which are reserved exclusively for Church dances, and perhaps the tambourine, which is rarely absent from a popular festival. There are no regular songs, but the professional bards make up their poetry as they go along. Usually they sing of war and the chase, how many elephants and lions have been killed, what doughty deeds their local heroes had performed, and sometimes they will allude to such current events as the arrival of a stranger or the consumption of mutton. But they have very little imagination, and they go on crooning over the same old subjects in the same old way handed down to them for thousands of years. Love is very rarely sung about, for the

very good reason that it has very little meaning or interest for an Abyssinian. In his view, a wife is little more than a beast of burden, or at the best a servant, and the only use of love as a theme is to introduce the quarrels and fights induced by rivalry for the possession of an useful spouse.

It is only in the dance that there lingers any tradition of higher things. You may detect a half-forgotten symbolism of courtship, but at the best it is only the courtship of the male for the female animal. Beside the Somali entertainment it is very stale and flat. The only new figure I could find was a collection of men leaping, panting, and grunting in a close circle round two or three women, like cannibals about to devour their victim. There was a continuous clapping of hands, and much monotonous singing, which the women's voices dominated. The incessant refrain was, "*Adôn, adôn, adoshäva*," which I understand is a pæan in praise of people who slay elephants and lions. It had a very catchy tune, and my men never grew tired of chaunting it all the way back to the coast, whenever they wished to provoke a laugh among themselves.

Indeed it is scarcely too much to say that the Abyssinians' only real diversion is that of everlasting gossip. Day and night they chatter at the top of their shrill, irritating voices. However long your day's march may have been, however fatiguing the road, however depressing the elements, they never seem to want to sleep, and far away into the night you may always find them squatting round their fires engaged in the

most animated discussions about nothing at all. If you have given them a sheep, they become as much excited as though you had given them a barrel of beer, and there is no limit to their shouting and screaming. They are very fond of any strong drink, the stronger the better, and seem to have such good heads that nothing affects them. I heard of a traveller who, finding that whiskey did not satisfy them, devised for their benefit a liqueur whose chief ingredients were methyated spirits and Worcester sauce. Far from discouraging their tendency to alcoholism, this pleased them vastly, and they were always clamouring for more. When I remarked to Abdi that I must not give the mulemen too much whiskey lest they should be unable to start, he replied in a bless-your-soul kind of tone, "Abyssinian man he drink so much whiskey you like to give him. Never make him sick. Never make him drunk. Not like white man." This last must have been a dig at a young Greek who came to my camp one evening, and, after very scanty libations, proved conclusively that he had no head at all for strong drink. That was an unfortunate occurrence, for I could see that he brought down upon him great contempt both from the Somalis, who are fanatical teetotalers, and from the Abyssinians, who are such valiant toppers.

Of all the subject races in Abyssinia, the Gallas are the most interesting. They come of a very ancient stock, and are reputed to be among the bravest of mankind. If once they could obtain guns, even to a

small extent, I believe they would soon make themselves masters of the empire. At present they are practically in the position of slaves, and are made to do all the hard manual work. I am told that in Egypt a Galla slave is particularly esteemed, first for



GALLA PLOUGHS.

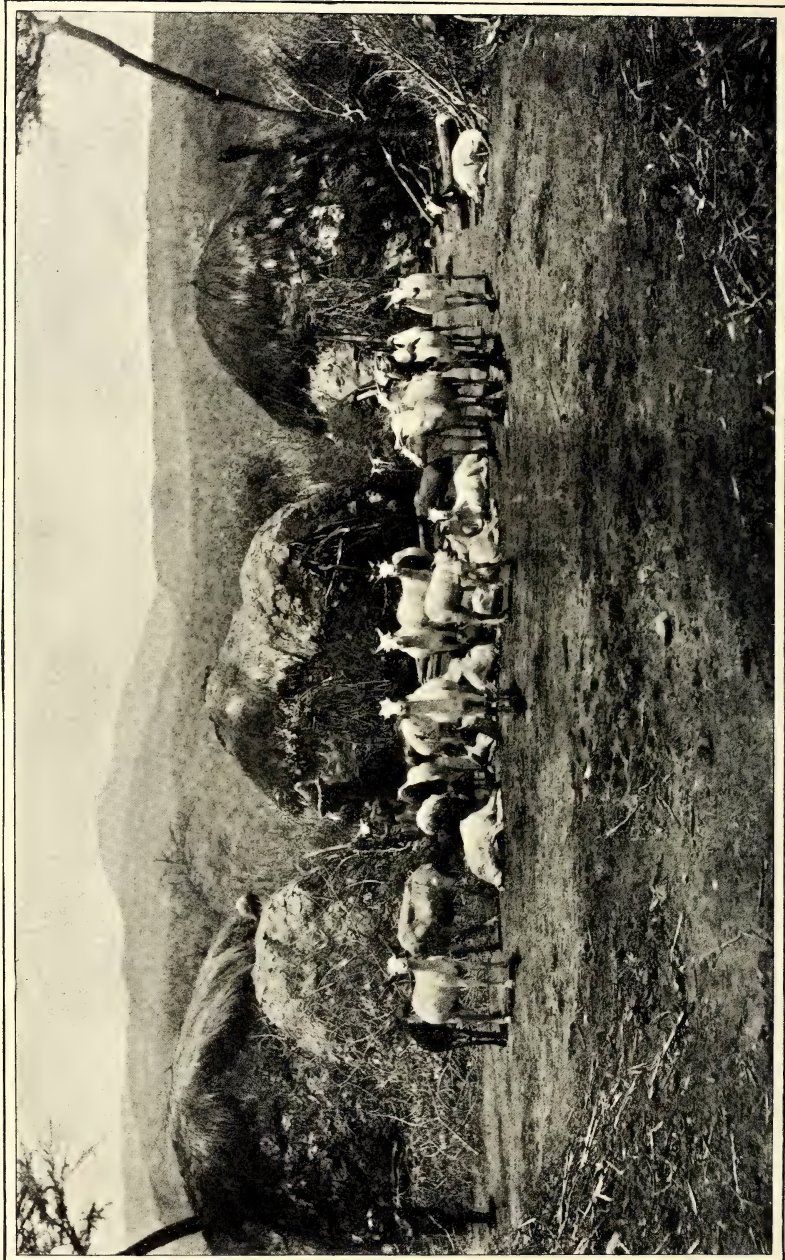
(*Photograph by CAPTAIN HARRINGTON.*)

the possession of a good heart, and secondly, for the possession of a body which, like an iceplant, is always cool even in the most burning climate.

The origin of the Gallas is lost in antiquity. One theory is that their name is derived from the word calla, which means "black" in a variety of languages.







GALLA HUTS ON THE WAY TO HARRAR.  
(Photo by P. Mathieu.)

[To face page 227.]

According to another tradition they are all descended from an Abyssinian princess who married a negro slave.

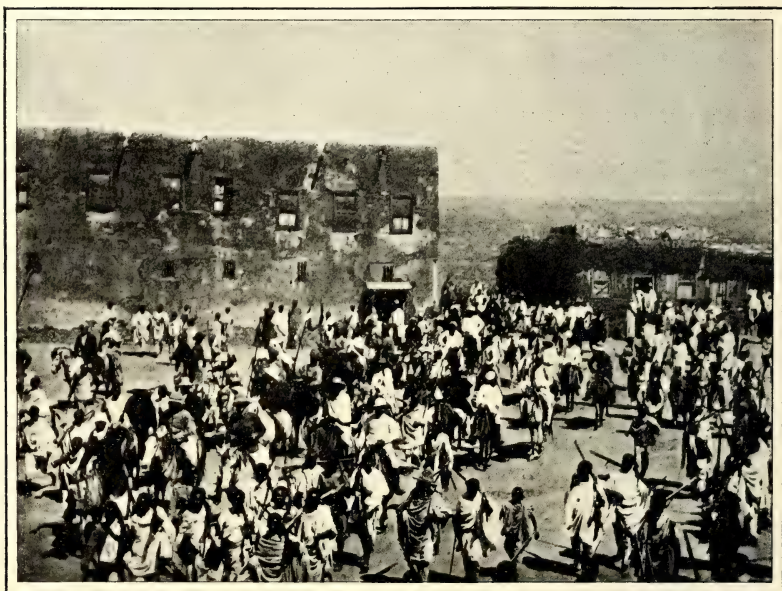
The Gallas are certainly the most natural of the natives to be met with on this journey. They have been entirely uncontaminated by civilisation, and though they are not scrupulous in the matter of murdering strangers, they have distinct ideas of honour and hospitality. Once they come to believe that fidelity is a duty in a given case, they are faithful unto death. Like most people who have been under subjection for generations, they are decidedly cunning, but let them be persuaded that they are being treated well, and there are no bounds to the confidence which may be reposed in them.

No other natives in this part of Africa are so expert with the spear, and it is obvious that if once they could be reduced to proper discipline, they must make excellent soldiers. Until recently the Abyssinians have taken great pains to prevent them from arming themselves, knowing very well that if once these brave savages came to realise their own strength, they would not acquiesce in further servitude. But now a certain French Count, whose acquaintance I was privileged to make, has been entrusted with the task of drilling them, and reducing them to discipline. He is very sanguine about success, and I certainly agree with him that he could not possibly have any finer material to work upon.

Somalis, Gallas, and Abyssinians alike regard their womenfolk as beasts of burthen. At Addis Ababa, if you lack wood, you order it by the woman-load,



and wherever you go you meet enormous faggots, which seem to be walking about alone, like Birnam wood on its way to Dunsinane, and it is only by very careful inspection that you discover a woman is staggering beneath. The fair sex are expected not merely to be hewers of wood and drawers of water,



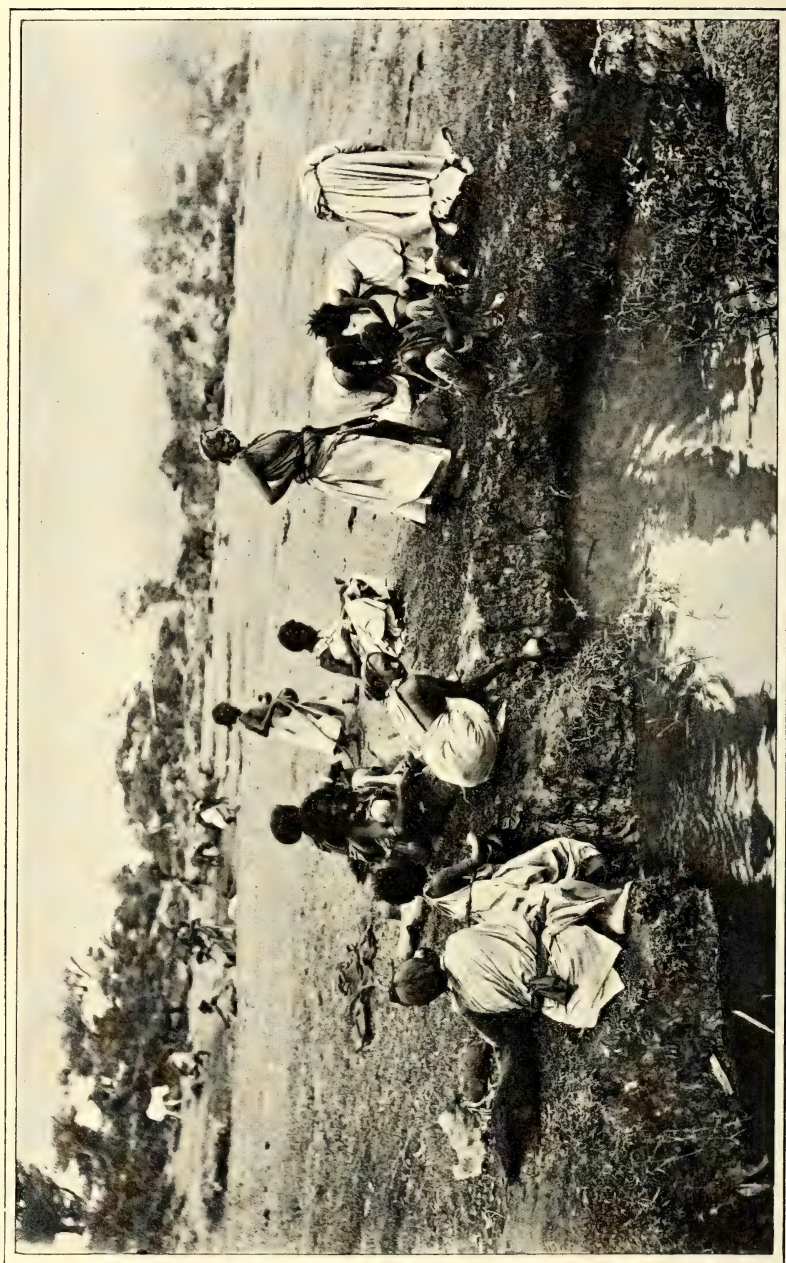
CAPTAIN HARRINGTON ENTERING HARRAR.

(*Photograph by J. GEROLIMATO.*)

but to do all the hard work of daily life. At every spring or muddy swamp which does duty as a well, there is always a great congregation of women filling huge round brass pots, which must be enormously heavy when filled, but which small girls carry home cheerfully for a couple of miles on the top of their heads.







WOMEN AT A WELL.  
(Photo by P. Mathieu.)

I have alluded to the survival in Abyssinia of the manners and customs of Bible times. You have only to pause at a well to realise the kind of scene at which Rebecca figured. In our conception of the word, it is not a well at all. Sometimes it is a pit in the sand about fifteen feet deep. At the bottom of this is a hole as big as a washhand basin, full of water, which has to be ladled out with a mug or cocoanut shell. The basin keeps on replenishing itself from the springs, except in time of drought. In other cases the well has the appearance of a small stagnant pond full of horrid green weeds, and as all the animals habitually walk into it to drink, it is not very appetising even after passing through a filter. These are the general meeting-places of the women from neighbouring villages, and they delight in lingering to gossip while they fill their pots or water-skins. As the water can only be scooped out in small quantities and by very few women at a time, they may often be detained several hours before they can obtain their supply. In Somaliland their chief employment, besides carrying burthens, is to look after the flocks. I often met a drove of some hundreds of sheep or goats marching across the desert, brought up at the rear by a lanky girl, wearing only a thick collection of bright glass beads and a loincloth petticoat. "She was a shepherdess, O so dark!" I would hum to myself.

I have spoken of the women carrying burthens. Their favourite burthen, so far as I could see, was a number of babies. The first impression was of a

black woman plodding along bent nearly double beneath a big round bundle, like a clothes-bag in appearance, attached to her back. It was only on near inspection that I would make out one or two or three bald black heads blinking out of the bundle. The construction of the load was very simple. A woman's costume generally consists of a big sheet, part of which is wound round the waist and the rest flung over her shoulder. When she is carrying babies, she simply wraps them up in that portion of the sheet which goes over her back.

The strange thing, both about Abyssinian and Somali women is, that in spite of all their hard work, they are by no means bad-looking. Generally, where the women do the work and the men take their ease, we find the men fine and large, the women stunted and hideous. Here on the contrary, unless they are actually grovelling beneath a burthen, they hold themselves quite erect, and, particularly when they are still young, they have supple limbs and good figures. As with the men, it is very rare for them to grow stout, and they certainly carry themselves with a great deal of distinction. They have great notions of coquetry, too, in spite of being despised by the other sex. They wear every bit of jewellery they can possibly lay hands upon, whether of silver or brass or glass.

But what they take a special pride in is the arrangement of their hair. This in the case of the Abyssinians is dressed in a very remarkable way. When finished, it looks like a number of glossy



black ridges, carved upon the top of the head, leaving wide valleys of skin between each ridge. The process is a very long one, each lock being separated by a pin, elaborately plaited, steeped in melted butter and then plastered down firmly against the skull. However, the hair only needs dressing at very long intervals, say two or three times a year, on the occasion of some high festival. To prevent all possibility of disarranging it, an Abyssinian woman never allows it to touch a pillow, but sleeps with her neck poised upon a wooden rest.

Though her features are comely, she is not the sort of person one would care to choose as a companion. For one thing, I do not suppose that she ever washes herself in her life, the butter on her hair grows rancid and emits a peculiarly pungent odour, which affronts the nostrils when you pass her in the desert, and wherever she goes she carries with her a large black cluster of flies congregated on her back.

Marriage is not popular with the women in either of these countries, and they will only consent to it when physical force is actually used. Indeed, the Somali husbands always carry a whip during the first fortnight of their honeymoon to keep their wives in order. It is a cruel-looking instrument, studded with steel on the handle, and fitted with a long strap of hippopotamus hide. In Abyssinia there are two kinds of marriage, which may be called the civil and the religious, or the temporary and the permanent, as you prefer. The permanent one seems to be very rare, only priests and persons of extraordinary piety

indulging in it. The other marriage is recognised as perfectly genuine so far as it goes, but, as in America, it may be dissolved at will. The man need only write out a bill of divorcement, and my lady must forthwith pack up her traps and be gone. To provide against this a certain sum is agreed upon at the time of marriage, for payment by the husband in the event of his wishing to divorce. My friend the coffee-planter at Harrar had to promise to pay £10 to his little Galla wife if ever he sent her away, but that was considered an exceptionally heavy fee. Prince Henry of Orleans relates another marriage custom among the Gallas, about the truth of which I am by no means confident. He alleges that, if a man falls in love with some one else's wife and she returns his regard, he has only to go to the husband and ask for her, and the husband is even obliged to give her a dowry.



SOMALI HUSBAND WITH WIFE-WHIP.  
(*Photograph by* CAPTAIN HARRINGTON.)





## Chapter IX

### ABYSSINIAN ADMINISTRATION

The Succession — “ Liberalism ” — Taxation — Money — Justice — Prisoners — The Army — Military Prospects — Barbarities of Warfare — Custom-houses — H. E. a Village Governor — Garasmach Banti — Black Red Tape — Local Passports — Lagahardim — A White Elephant — Choba — Detained by Officials — More Worries — Greed at Gildessa.

THOUGH the Abyssinians seem to imagine themselves the only really white people and the only real Christians in the world, we of Europe being red-skin infidels, their ideas of administration and government are essentially those of the darkest ages. An absolute monarchy I admire, but an empire with no fixed laws of succession is difficult to reconcile with the most indulgent theories of legitimism. There are in Abyssinia a number of petty chieftains, who call themselves Negus or King. But their power is at the best strictly limited and local. They are sometimes appointed by the Emperor, but more often it is the strongest of them who seizes the throne and keeps it so long as he has a sufficient following. The consequence is that civil war is more or less chronic, and as the Emperor's writ does not run very far outside his own petty kingdom of Shoa, there is very little control over anybody.

In Servia I thought I had discovered the only country in the world, where nobody knows and nobody seems to care who will succeed on a demise of the crown. But not only is this the case in the empire of Abyssinia, but it is certain that a prolonged period of anarchy must ensue upon the death of Menelik. The Negus Negusti, or King of Kings, is merely the strongest man in the empire, just as a Negus is the strongest man in his own locality. There is no idea of hereditary succession, and whether or no Menelik has any sons is a matter of the supremest indifference to anybody. He is patriotic enough to wish to save his country from the horrors of civil war, and I believe he is working to secure the succession for Ras Makonnen, who is generally looked upon as the second man in the empire. But Ras Makonnen has not so good a life as Menelik, and, though a very shrewd man, may not have the strength and character necessary for seizing and holding the Imperial throne.

While I was at Harrar I had an interesting conversation with a member of what I may call the young Abyssinia party, a restless individual who had travelled much in Europe and brought back many ideas of what some people are pleased to call progress. He told me quite gravely that he desired to see a Parliament established in Ethiopia. All his constructive ideas were equally ridiculous, but when he dwelt upon the inconvenience of the present system of succession, he was able to make out a good case.

"Anybody," said he, "even the humble individual now addressing you may consider that he has the Imperial crown in his knapsack. Suppose that Menelik dies to-morrow. I consult with half a dozen friends, and they agree to regard me as their leader. We take our spears and guns and ride out into a village. There we enrol the inhabitants by threats and promises. If I succeed, they shall have money and high official posts, whereas if they refuse to join me, I shall kill them and take everything they have. I go on like this from village to village, and very soon I have several hundred warriors at my back. Meanwhile several other men have been doing the same thing on their own account. I meet them one at a time, defeat them and enrol their followers. Unless somebody kills me, I am presently at the head of a large army, I march upon the capital, or more probably found a capital of my own, and I proclaim myself King of Kings, Conquering Lion of Judah. I have only taken myself as an instance to show you how possible it is for anybody in the country to seize the reins of government. You may be quite certain that this will be the way in which somebody or other will turn himself into the next Emperor. Who he may be not a soul can have the faintest inkling until the time shall come."

The system of taxation in vogue has at least the merit of simplicity. In every village a shum, or governor, is nominated by the Government. He takes taxes from the people by certain rules, which are always violated; meanwhile the Government

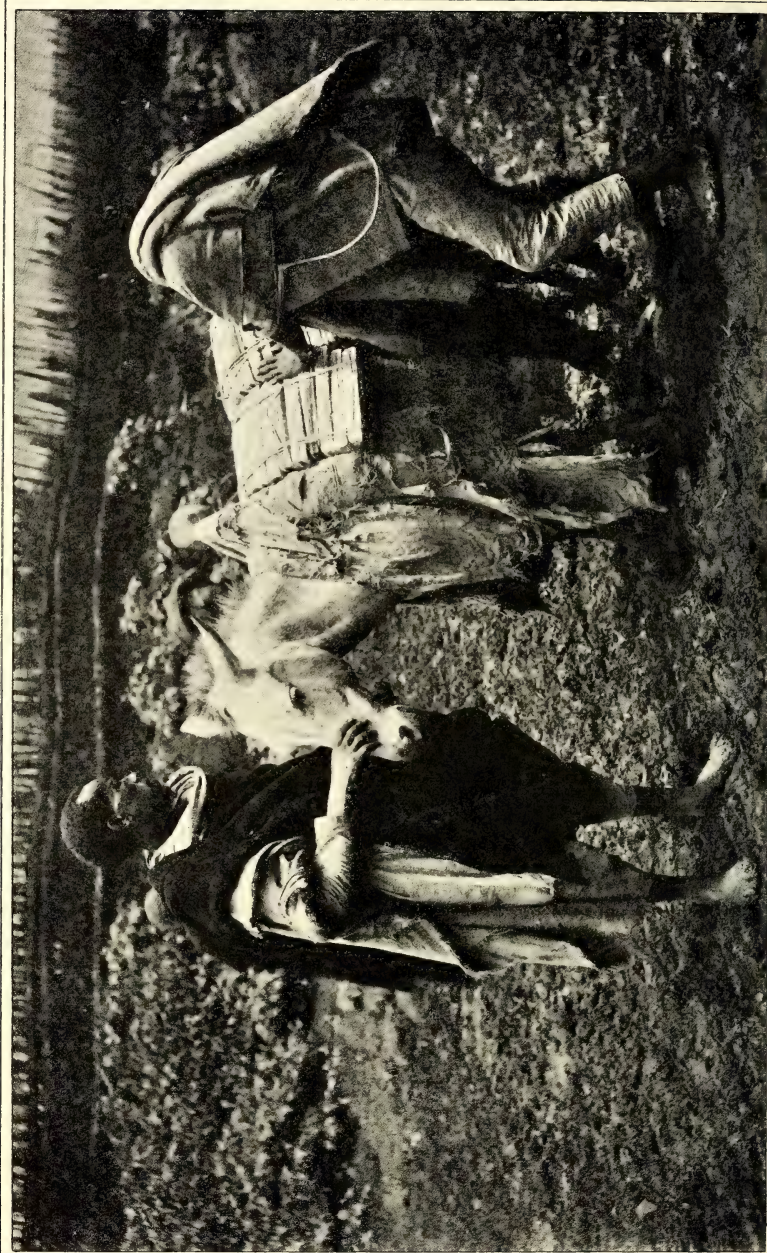
exacts taxes from the shums in the most arbitrary and haphazard way. Sometimes a shum may be forgotten for a long time, and he begins to grow rich upon the money he has collected. Then all of a sudden there comes an exorbitant demand from headquarters, and he must satisfy it as best he may or go to prison until he can do so. Everybody is made to pay tithes on all he possesses, and there are taxes on every sale at a public market, but the favourite method of collecting revenue is to come down suddenly upon those who are suspected of being rich, and oblige them to disgorge. Accordingly Abyssinians are always very anxious to make themselves out much poorer than they really are. Of course the system involves a good deal of hardship, but it will probably commend itself to Radical reformers, who believe in taxing the rich and sparing the poor. So far, oddly enough, Europeans in Abyssinia have been left practically untaxed, save for an import duty of 8 per cent. on all goods intended to be sold by retail.

Menelik is, beyond all else, a merchant prince, and his people have all the smaller instincts of tradesmen. They give nothing for nothing—indeed they generally contrive to obtain far more than a fair equivalent for anything they consent to sell. But they are certainly not businesslike, certainly not practical.

Take their currency for instance. I had lingering half-hopes of finding beads legal tender, and of being able to exchange a bit of glass for a nugget or an emerald. But the Abyssinians have passed the childish stage of commerce without reaching the







DONKEY LADEN WITH BARS OF SALT, THE ABYSSINIAN SIXPENCES.  
(Photo by P. Mathieu.)

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approaches of maturity. Until recently the money table might have been set down as follows :—

4 cartridges ...	...	1 salt.
4 salts...	...	1 Maria Theresa dollar.

The cartridges might be of any size or calibre, and passed current just as well if some dishonest person filled them with sand. They were not intended for use, but as a medium of exchange. When I first saw a salt I imagined it was a grindstone ; on closer inspection I could just make out that it was a bar of salt much begrimed by frequent handling. All are of the same size, shape, and weight, being regularly minted in Tigré, where 10 go to \$1.

The Maria Theresa dollar is a facsimile of the coin of 1780. It is still issued by the Austrian Government, and circulates as a trade coin nearly all over Africa. Though roughly about the size of a five-shilling piece, it only exchanges for a little more than its intrinsic value, which was about 1s. 11d. when I left Africa.

Menelik started dollars with his own image and superscription, and they circulate equally with the Maria Theresa at Harrar and Addis Ababa, but are little known elsewhere, and suffer painful discount at the coast. He has also issued divisionary silver money, the smallest being a piastre of the same size and reputed value as the two-anna piece, which Indian merchants have installed at Harrar.

With a delightful ignorance of political economy, Menelik has made an arbitrary decree that sixteen



piastres (or sixteen two-anna bits) shall go to one of his dollars; in other words, that a dollar shall be worth two rupees, whereas it really fetches less than one and a half in the market. The result is that, between themselves, individuals only give eleven or twelve piastres to the dollar, according to the fluctuation of the exchange, but that the post and other Government offices must reckon it at sixteen. At Harrar you may have sixteen piastres' worth of stamps



MENELIK'S DOLLAR.

for your dollar, but the postmaster draws the line at giving you change on the artificial scale. I was told, however, at Addis Ababa that many Indians had made a great deal of money by obtaining piastres there at sixteen to the dollar and disposing of them at twelve.

At once I despatched a servant to the toll office in the market to ask for as many piastres as could be spared up to £100. But the answer came back: Very sorry, their stock of piastres had run short.



Evidently Abyssinians were not such fools as they sounded.

The prime drawback about the currency of Abyssinia is that there is practically no smaller coin than a silver twopence. Menelik has had some copper minted, but I have not seen it anywhere except as a curiosity. I remember being stopped on the road one day by a man who produced something with a great air of mysterious importance, and offered to let me have it for a dollar. On investigation it proved to be one of the still-born halfpence of the realm.

At Harrar there were all sorts of inconveniences for my men whenever they wanted to make small purchases. Suppose Abdi ordered a cup of coffee, worth an eighth or a tenth of a piastre, he must hand over a whole piastre and come again seven or nine times more to exhaust it. Fancy having a score or so of similar accounts running in various parts of the town! What a contrast for Aden Somalis after the infinitely subdivided coinage of India!

On the road only dollars and salts were accepted, and, before I could lay in a supply of salts, I had to resort to all sorts of shifts in the way of barter when I wanted eggs or milk or fuel. At one place I gave a handful of my mule's durra, at another some lumps of sugar, which excited great curiosity, and elsewhere a cheap loincloth from Aden. Besides cartridges, I found that empty bottles were nearly always acceptable as the equivalent of piastres.

Among the current piastres were battered ones from Egypt with the image and superscription almost

effaced. It was generally touch and go whether they would be accepted or not. One day I found a trouser button among the coins in my pocket, and I asked the cook how many eggs he thought it would fetch. He thought I was serious, and kept shaking his head for a long time, saying, "No, no, sah'b, he no take that."

Another drawback is that the highest denomination is a coin as big as a crown and worth only a florin. I have often wondered, if I became possessed of Hans Andersen's tinder-box and made my way down to those delightful dogs with eyes as big as saucers, how much money I should be able to take away. If it were all in Maria Theresa dollars, I am afraid I should not be enriched for life. On leaving Harrar, homeward bound, I found myself stranded with £44 worth of them which I had not packed when my caravan set out, and it was as much as ever that a Somali could carry the sackful on his head. At very short intervals he would bring it down on to the ground with a great jingle, and beg to have his burthen transferred to some other body. Luckily there were no highwaymen lurking in wait amid the shrubberies of candelabra cactus.

Abyssinian justice is largely dependent upon the exigencies of Abyssinian taxation. I believe there is a code, based upon the fatah-Negust, which is derived more or less indirectly from the old Roman law. Tradition, too, has a certain force, but practically every judge decides according to the inspiration of the moment. There is a short way with thieves in Abyssinia. You may see them

undergoing punishment almost any Saturday in the market-place at Addis Ababa. First they are spread-eagled, then the stolen objects are placed between their arms, and they are flogged round the capital. For graver offences, hands or feet are removed in public. First the executioner comes brandishing a razor; with this he cuts the skin all round the limb, which he then proceeds to chop off at the joint. Then the wretched victim is left bleeding on the ground, unless some good Samaritan cares to come and minister to his wounds. M. Ilg, the Swiss Minister for Foreign Affairs, when he first obtained power in the land, remonstrated with Menelik about the barbarism of these penalties, but the Emperor replied, "If we tried to establish the gentle methods, which suffice in your country, the only result would be that crime would go utterly unchecked. We cannot have elaborate formalities, and policemen, and magistrates, and juries, and all that sort of thing. If we had roads and railways it might be another matter, but at present it is so difficult to get about that we consider ourselves very fortunate in catching as many culprits as we do. And when we catch them it is absolutely necessary to make an example of them." M. Ilg soon saw that there was a great deal of truth in this, and he ceased to make remonstrances.

Moreover, criminals have plenty of warning, and can nearly always get off by making a money payment. The first few infractions of the law are generally not punished at all, but merely noted against an offender. Then one fine day he is seized and

put in irons. An investigation is made as to his wealth. He is told, say, that he must pay 25,000 dollars, and so soon as this is forthcoming he is let out. As an instance of Abyssinian methods, I may mention the case of the chief of police at Harrar. A



AN ABYSSINIAN PRISONER AND HIS WARDER.  
(*Photograph by CAPTAIN HARRINGTON.*)

friend of mine saw him bastinadoed in the public square. What was my friend's astonishment to hear, eight days later, that the man was out of prison and restored to his functions.

Prisons are generally used chiefly for political offenders, and for persons who are slow to meet



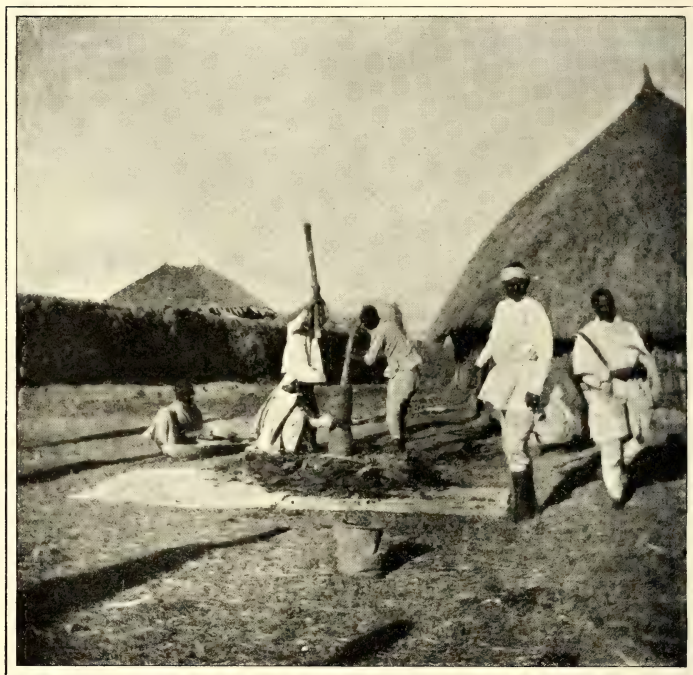
the demands of the tax-gatherer. Often on my journey in the open country I would pass a couple of men, one of whom had his left wrist connected with the other's right by a steel chain. They walked along quite cheerfully, and just behind them was a policeman with a gun pointing at them. This was such an ordinary event that nobody seemed to take any particular notice of it.

Within its limitations the Abyssinian army calls for considerable admiration. It is almost exclusively composed of cavalry, and every Abyssinian is a born rider. To facilitate the question of mounts, the Emperor has decreed that no horse may be sold within his dominions for more than forty dollars (under £4). As the average horse is worth a good deal more, this in any other country would mean that few horses would be sold; but he has gone further, and established a system of commandeering, by which soldiers may requisition any horses which they fancy.

At the word of command the soldiers set out on horseback, accompanied by their women and children, and travel very fast. For a sudden rush upon an unprepared enemy they are unequalled. But there is no provision for commissariat. During a campaign they live on bits of broken bread, or *durgosh*,<sup>1</sup> and have only the rations which they can carry on their saddles. There is no possibility of replenishing in a country where no one does any more work than is

<sup>1</sup> Durgosh is a thin unleavened bread made from teff flour dried in the sun and pounded into a powder. The favourite way of serving it is as a porridge mixed with *ghee* (the native butter).

necessary for his immediate needs; and though an Abyssinian appetite is very easily satisfied, it is obvious that he cannot go on very long with such methods. I have been told that at a pinch the bits of broken bread in the saddle-bag may last him and his family for a



PREPARING DURGOSH.

(*Photograph by CAPTAIN HARRINGTON.*)

couple of months, but that is the very outside, and probably a gross exaggeration. On the other hand, this absence of commissariat is advantageous for a swift, short campaign, and is assisted by the absence of artillery and tents. The neat and ingenious huts, to which I have alluded, are built up in about two



HUTS OF ABYSSINIAN SOLDIERS ; THE WOMAN ON THE LEFT IS SEWING.

(Photo by P. Mathieu.)

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hours out of materials to be found at most camping-places.

No uniform of any sort is worn, and there is nothing to distinguish an Abyssinian soldier from a civilian. Each wears the same grubby shamma ; each probably carries a gun, the muzzle of which is stuffed up with a bit of hay or rag ; each rides the same kind of rough, long-tailed horse, which he mounts from the right side, because his long curved sword in its red leathern scabbard is worn upon his right hip ; in fact, the soldier and civilian are merely two different aspects of the same person. Anybody is liable to be ordered out to military service at the beck of his feudal superior, but if a body of men grow tired of the campaign, there is very little to prevent them from retiring home to their flocks.

In the field there is a good deal of punctilio about the superior officers with their high-sounding titles. Certain men take their orders only from the Emperor, others from these only, and so on ; but this relaxes instead of tightening discipline. As was the case in our own civil wars, when it comes to a battle, the greater part of the Abyssinian army fights where and how it pleases, advancing recklessly upon an obvious opportunity and tearing into headlong flight at the first suspicion of disaster.

The Italians were defeated because they advanced too far and despised their enemies, who made a lucky rush and overwhelmed them. Against a slow, careful, patient, unrelenting advance, the Abyssinians would be helpless. If Menelik were im-

prudent enough to quarrel with us, we could invade him from the Soudan at any moment, and in one year, or certainly in two, could annex and reorganise his dominions. But it would occupy a great many men and cost an enormous sum of money, which the advantages to be derived from an occupation would not balance. So long as he maintains his present friendly relations and resists the beguilements with which France and Russia seek to lure him on to his own destruction, we can afford to leave him alone and help him with his very modest aspirations. Still, for the sake of settlers in Abyssinia, if they should ever attain to important proportions, it might be well if some white people inflicted a salutary lesson. This the French colony at Harrar quite admits, and many of them said to me that they would welcome even a British occupation in preference to the present system of barbaric government.

It is no doubt reasonable that a nation of niggers, possessing three hundred thousand rifles, should take a tone different from that of niggers who are not permitted to possess any, but they go too far when they presume to arrogate to themselves a superiority over civilised countries against which they could not possibly stand up. I admire their ancient civilisation so far as it goes, or rather so far back as it goes, and I hope that their independence may be respected ; but this must depend largely upon their own wisdom and prudence and modesty.

The atrocities committed by them during the war against Italy are not easy to condone, and arouse

doubts as to the extent of the toleration which they ought to be allowed by Europe. When I was at Harrar I bought a bracelet, consisting of Italians' teeth strung together. They have some black marks of decay or of discolouring by tobacco, but on the whole form a pretty ornament of glistening ivory. Whenever I look upon it there come to my mind gruesome visions of black ghouls hovering over the battlefields and forcing their horrible pincers into the mouths of wounded and dying. Yet this was one of the least of the horrible mutilations which the Abyssinians were accustomed to practise upon those who fell into their inhuman clutches.

The most delightful custom-house I ever passed through was at Zaila. There were no impertinent interrogatories, no brutal ransacking of luggage, not even a minute's detention. About a day after my arrival a message came asking me to jot down a list of any articles which had to pay duty. I did so, and in due course a reasonable bill was sent in. Custom-houses are always odious, but when they take your word in this very courteous way you feel no annoyance and scarcely any temptation to cheat. At Jibuti, too, to give the Frenchman his due, there was very little bother. An official came up and asked me in very fair English what my baggage contained, and, learning that I was only passing through to Europe, allowed me to go my way in peace. I only wish I could congratulate the Abyssinians on similar forbearance. They certainly bear out my theory that custom-houses are a relic of barbarism, for these

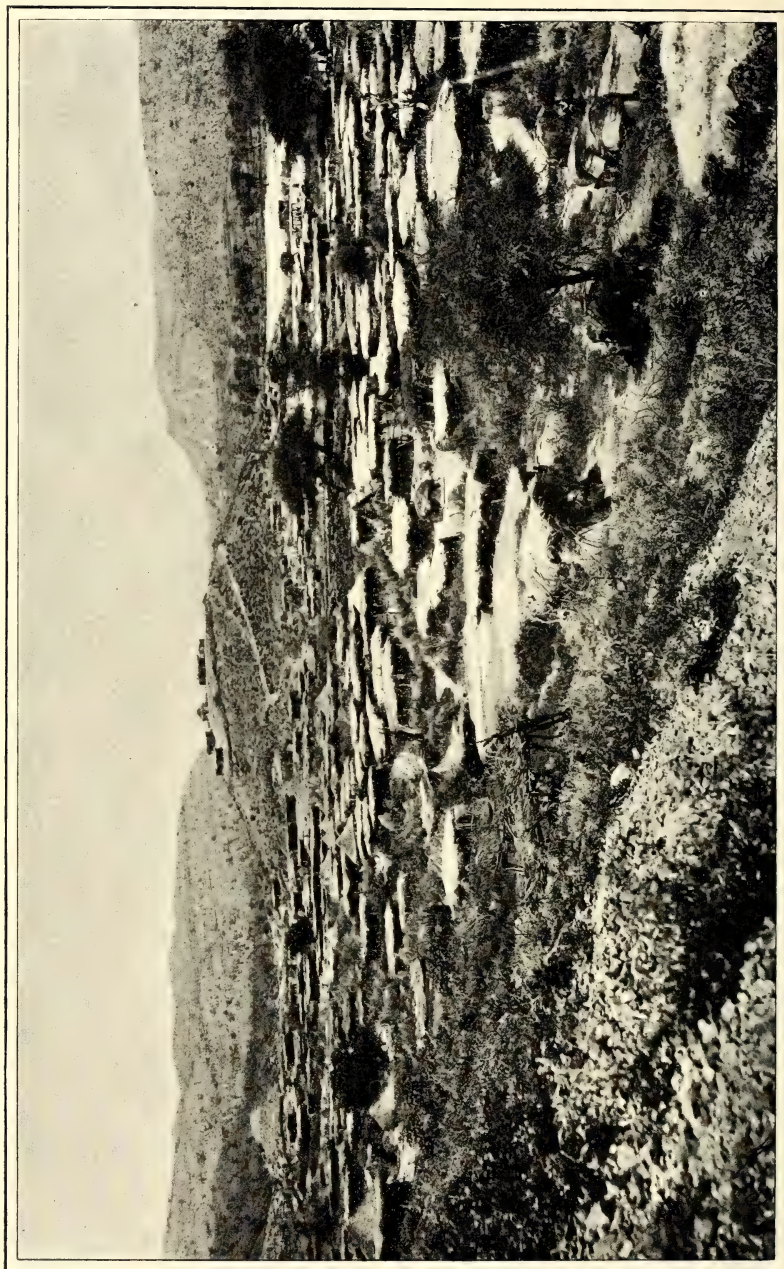
barbarians take advantage of the institution to the fullest and most barbarous extent. I was not molested on my way up until I reached Harrar. At Somadu, where I first entered Abyssinian territory, there was nothing but a guard-house—a little hut perched on the top of a hill—flying the Abyssinian flag : white, red, and white horizontal stripes. No one took any notice of me, and I was free to pass on to Gildessa. Here there was some talk of a custom-house, but my amiability to His Excellency the Village Governor exempted me from trouble until my return.

As I was taking a well-earned rest there with a novel under a tree, Reggel, my cook, came to inform me that company was coming. I looked up and beheld a stout black riding a mule. He wore a large felt wideawake, a white sheet, and a pair of white knickerbockers. Beside him ran three Abyssinian soldiers, two of whom were boys with a Japanese cast of countenance. It was a state visit from His Excellency the Governor of Gildessa.

He dismounted some ten yards away, removed his wideawake, and advanced holding out his hand. I made him sit down and despatched Reggel for refreshments. Now we were in a quandary, for my other English-speaking servants were taking their afternoon off. However, we nodded and grinned at intervals, and His Excellency was graciously pleased to accept one of my cigarettes. Bottled cherries and whiskey-pegs arrived. He behaved like a child among fireworks when a cork jumped. He grinned and said, "Ah-h!" Then he tasted the decoction,







GILDESSA : THE GOVERNOR'S HOUSE ON THE HILL.

(Photo by P. Mathieu.)

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grinned wider, and said, "Ah-h-h!" The cherries he would not touch until I had gone through the formality of tasting them first. This is Ethiopian etiquette and a safeguard against poisoners. When he had eaten and drunk he passed on the remains to his retainers, who tasted in turn and politely said, "Ah-h!"

I called in the cook to interpret. He translated my remarks into Somali, and one of His Excellency's retainers translated them on into Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia. But though my guest stayed a very long time and consumed much whiskey, we seemed to get through very little conversation. He remarked that he had expected me to visit him. I replied that with us the resident paid the first call. Then he apologised, and said he would have called earlier only his son had died yesterday and he was much distressed. I consoled politely, and poured out more whiskey. Presently he took from one of his retainers a letter, which he wished me to translate for him. It was from an English traveller who had recently passed that way. It began, "Dear Sir," thanked him for his attentions, and begged his acceptance of a silver watch. Every traveller gave him a letter and a present, His Excellency remarked in comment, eyeing me significantly.

An hour or two later I rode across the torrent-bed and up the steep hill to the guard-huts, escorted by all my servants, to return the visit. His Excellency's summer-house did not err in the direction of vulgar display. The wattled roof was bare, and the mud

walls were rudely whitewashed. Upon them were pinned a few gaudy French lithographs, the most conspicuous being one of the Virgin and Child, which served to remind me that I was once more in a Christian country. A variety of guns and cartridge-belts completed the adornment of the walls. The furniture consisted of a ragged ottoman for me and a stool for my host. I obtained some information about hiring camels on to Harrar, but we had already exhausted our topics of conversation, and I could see that he was depressed at receiving no present. So I hastened to assure him that I should send him one with a written testimonial before I went away. He then brightened up, and volunteered to write about me to Atto Marsha, who is the real Governor of Gildessa, but prefers to dwell as an absentee among the gaieties of Harrar. He escorted me some twenty yards along the top of his hill and lavished good wishes upon me. Then came the question, what to bestow upon His Excellency. Abdi suggested a gun, but that was ridiculous, and I had to remember that I might have to go on rewarding other functionaries on the same scale further on. After much reflection I decided to send him three small presents, so I despatched a bottle of whiskey, some bottled greengages, and a bee clock, with a message that three is the number of the Trinity. He was evidently satisfied, for presently he returned my compliment with a goat, a basket of eggs, and a request for a letter.

It seemed to me flat to address an Ethiopian



Governor as "Dear Sir." So I began: "May it please your Excellency," I thanked him for "the sonorous he-goat which your Excellency has deigned to confer upon me," and I wound up, "Given at our camp in Gildessa this sixteenth day of December in the year of Grace one thousand eight hundred and ninety-nine." This was more the sort of thing, methought, though after all it mattered little, as His Excellency had no English.

In spite of all these amenities, however, His Excellency used me very ill on my return journey, as will presently appear.

I entered Harrar several hours before my caravan, prompted by a great desire for my correspondence. I was for going directly to the Consulate, but when I reached the big square I was compelled to go first to the custom-house and give up my guns. I emerged from a throng of unsavoury natives and hastened to ask my way to the Consulate. "No, you must first go to the Abyssinian Consul," said a man in the street. I was for taking no heed, but I had scarcely reached the middle of the square before a fat man in a dingy shamma barred my way and took hold of my bridle. I raised my whip to strike him, but Abdi, in great alarm, informed me that this was a high official, and that I should get into fearful trouble. Every stranger before going anywhere in Harrar must visit the Garas-mach, or Acting Governor, whom the man in the street had translated as Abyssinian Consul. No; I was a British subject and meant to go first to the British Consul. If he said it was necessary, I would

see the Governor, but not otherwise. However, by this time I was surrounded by about fifty gesticulating natives, and I realised that I should only waste time by further resistance. So I rode into the Governor's courtyard, which I hoped was a great insult, and strutted up the stairs without removing my helmet.

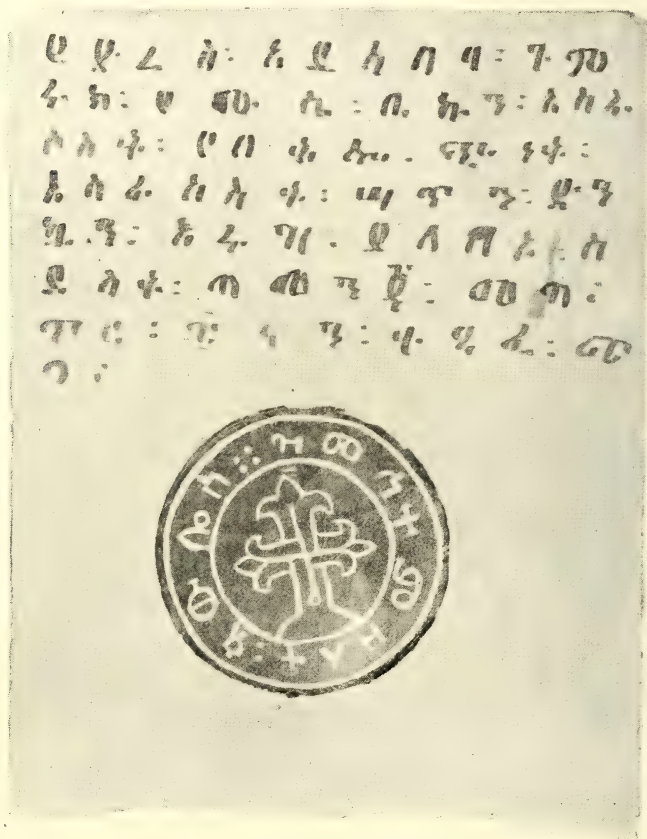
A number of officials and policemen, all wearing the ordinary dirty shamma, were hanging about an open doorway, through which I could perceive an old man sitting cross-legged on a divan. The official said I must wait until the Garasmach had finished his business and was ready to receive me. My only answer was to push my way roughly into the audience chamber and confront the old man, who seemed greatly surprised by my intrusion. His divan stood in a corner upon a rich carpet, which it seemed no one was permitted to cross; indeed, all my servants hastened to take off their shoes when they entered the room. I stalked straight on to the carpet with my dusty boots, came close up to the Garasmach, and began a loud harangue in English. I was a British subject, and protested against having been interfered with on my way to the British Consulate. If this was the hospitality which Abyssinians showed to strangers, they would do well to make an exception in favour of Englishmen. I was on my way to the Court of the Emperor, and any one who interfered with me did so at his peril. . . .

This was all very fine, but no one understood. My Somalis had no Amharic, and the Abyssinians there had no Somali. However, the old man saw that I

was angry, and, learning that I was an Englishman, waved his hand to show that I need not be detained, whereupon I strutted out without any pretence at farewell.

It was days before I could rescue my baggage from the custom-house. The officials would make appointments, I would make my way to the untidy courtyard and be jostled by mulemen and merchants, only to learn from the clerks that the right official was absent. This happened several times, and my patience was more than exhausted. At last I found the right man, and he coolly invited me to unpack my forty-six cases on the filthy pavement in the midst of a dense throng of unsavoury peasants. I said that was out of the question, and the man replied that in that case I could take nothing away. So I went off and appealed to the Consul, and he very kindly returned with me. Knowing exactly how to manage Abyssinians, he smiled and wheedled and flattered them, took one man by the hand, led him up affectionately to a trunk, and lifted up a corner to show that there was no merchandise. For his sake they consented to allow me to take away my necessities, but they still declared that all my caravan kit would have to be opened another day. The good Consul accompanied me on three successive days to the custom-house, until he succeeded in catching one man in a good humour, and, after leading him about by the hand for over half an hour and enumerating the contents of each package, obtained a grudging permission for me to remove my possessions.

If there was all this bother to enter Harrar, there was almost as much to depart again, or at least there would have been but for the assistance of the indefatigable Consul. A passport is required before



MY ABYSSINIAN PASSPORT.

you may issue from the gates, and other passports are exacted at two custom-houses, Lagahardim and Choba, on the way up to the capital.

The formalities were endless. We had to repeat our



information at least a dozen times, while lazy officials squatted and scribbled very deliberately, holding a piece of paper in the palm of one hand and inscribing queer hieroglyphs thereon. During the conference various natives seemed to regard the Consul and me as strange beasts provided for their entertainment. One man came and grinned in my face, so I took him by the shoulders and gently but firmly pushed him away out into the crowd. Another coolly took hold of my walking-stick to examine it. I dug him playfully in the stomach ; still he did not desist. I shouted at him in English ; all in vain. At length I had to strike him on the side of his shaven head, whereupon he retired amid loud laughter from the bystanders. The Consul was somewhat perturbed, and wanted to know what the man's offence had been. But Atto Joseph, an Abyssinian official of deep brown complexion, remarked cheerfully, "All right. It was a negro! One mustn't stop to argue with that sort of person."

When I reached the town gates on my departure, two or three crouching men looked up surlily at me and demanded my passport. As I did not want the trouble of ransacking my pockets, I pretended not to understand and hurried my mule forward. Luckily they were too lazy to get up and worry me. But they continued shouting until I was well out of hearing.

So I heard nothing more of custom-houses until I reached Lagahardim, one of the chief stages on the journey. I had been travelling over more or less flat

country for a long time, when I was suddenly confronted by a river at the foot of a lofty and precipitous mountain. My companions pointed upwards to a couple of little summer-houses perched nearly half-way up. These were the telephone station and custom-house, which are fortunately always close to each other on this route. When I had camped, I sent one of my men up to take my passport and say that I intended to pass on early next day. Late in the evening three or four ragged officials came down and saluted me with very deep bows. They said that it was usual for travellers to have their luggage examined up on the hill as they passed, but that, as a special favour to me, they had come all the way down to my camp. This was an obvious hint for a present, so I gave them a few dollars, which they touched with their foreheads and then secreted in some mysterious pockets. After walking round my baggage and asking various foolish questions, they demanded a further small sum as duty and then took their departure with many compliments.

In an hour or so two of them emerged again out of the darkness accompanied by an unwieldy form, which I could not at first distinguish.

"They bring a cow, sah'b," said Abdi.

"A cow? What for?"

"They say you their father and their mother, and all they have is yours. So they bring this cow."

"But what am I to do with a cow?"

Abdi's eyes glistened. "We eat him very quick, sah'b," said he.

By this time the two men had led an enormous ox up into the firelight. It stood very square, like a Spanish bull in the presence of the espada, and I noticed that it had very fine horns.

"It is not a cow," I said to Abdi.

"Yes, sah'b, a cow. He very fine cow."

"Well, look for yourself," I said laughing, and Reggel, the cook, burst into a hilarious roar.

Now this was all very fine, but if I accepted this beast my men would gorge themselves so frightfully that they would not be fit to travel for weeks. Besides, I should be expected to give at least a gun in exchange for so handsome a present. So I told the two officials that I was touched by their kindness, but that we were off too soon to have time to eat an ox before we went. Would they do me the favour of drinking a glass of whiskey?

They were pleased to do me that favour, but they assured me that I was a very big chief, and that it would be a great affront to them if I sent back their present. They would not be able to hold up their heads again in the village, and everybody would point at them as they passed. From the merry twinkle in their eyes as they said this I could see that they were bent upon making a deal, and I felt that I was in a dilemma. However, after plying them with whiskey, I persuaded them to consider the ox as accepted by me. Then, if they would keep it for me, and I had more time on my return journey, we would kill it and make very merry together, drinking so much whiskey that none of us should be able to stand.

They saw at once that this meant there was no deal, but my refusal agreed with their own ideas of diplomacy, so they went off good-humouredly, assuring me that the ox was now mine, and that, if they died before my return, their heirs and successors would keep it for me.

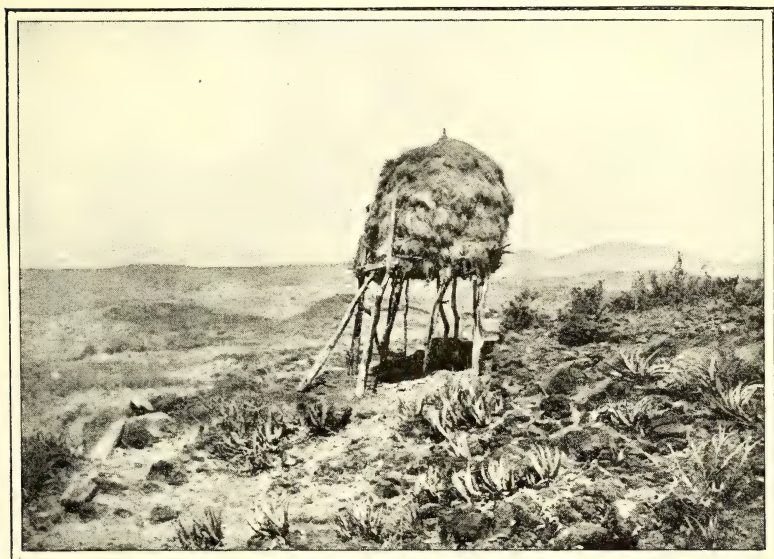
I am told that I was unusually fortunate in escaping exactions both here and at Choba, the next custom-house, where I got off for a small fee and half an hour's delay by the roadside. The people at Lagahardim took my passport from Harrar and gave me another for Choba, where this was exchanged for another to be given up at Addis Ababa. There, being unable to discern a town on my arrival, I was fortunately not discerned by any officials, and accordingly escaped any further formalities for the moment.

I was assured that no passports were necessary for the return journey—not even the little scraps of paper with seals and hieroglyphics which I had been obliged to produce on the way up. But as I drew near to the police station and custom-house of Choba I passed a man with a gun, who volunteered the information to my servants that I had no passport, and that I should certainly not be allowed to proceed any further. Accordingly I hurried on to undergo the inevitable discussion with the officials before my caravan arrived, so as to reduce the delay. My spirits rose at the prospect of a row, which would at least be a change for me, and perhaps provide an experience worth recording. If the worst came to



the worst, there was always the telephone at Choba, and I could ring up Captain Harrington.

The custom-house is perched on the top of a very steep hill, which dominates the road. There is an extraordinary sort of big bird's-nest standing on three wooden legs at the very edge of the precipice. This is used as a look-out place, to prevent any one from



CHOBÄ CUSTOM-HOUSE, LOOK-OUT NEST.

stealing by without paying toll and exhibiting passports. At the foot of the hill are a long zareba of brambles, which people can only pass in single file, and additional tufts of brambles to close up the road entirely in case of need. I scrambled up the hill and made my way to the police station, some thirty yards behind the human bird's-nest. Several

dirty men came out of the telephone hut and gaped at me.

I opened the ball by producing my flask and doling out whiskey all round. Then I mentioned casually that my caravan would be passing presently. They asked for my passport and said no one could go through without one : I must wait an hour or so while they telephoned about me to Addis Ababa. So I went into the hut and ate my lunch while they screamed away in their shrill voices, making all sorts of hopeless efforts to pronounce my name through the telephone. Foofooan and Fifine were their nearest approaches, and each man was very zealous to correct his neighbour. At last, as I was finishing my lunch, the answer came that I had better communicate with Captain Harrington. As, however, he lives nearly three hours' journey away from the call-office at Addis Ababa, I tried to send a message to the Swiss postmaster, but after much discussion I was told he was absent.

Then I informed the officials for about the fourth time that Menelik had offered me a special pass, but that it had been pronounced unnecessary. I backed up my suggestion that they might allow me to depart by distributing cigarettes all round. Everybody seemed very anxious to disclaim responsibility for detaining me, and it was pointed out to me that the decision lay with the head policeman, a ragged, filthy, wall-eyed individual, clad in a bit of sacking and a cartridge belt, and carrying a gun apparently permanently over his shoulder. At this moment news

came from the bird's-nest that my caravan was passing through the zareba at the foot of the hill. I followed the head policeman out and found him shouting to them to stop. I shouted to them to go on. Then I told the man that he would get into serious trouble if he stopped me, and that he must bear in mind what a very different thing it was to interfere with an Englishman and to bully a mere Frenchman or Greek. He said he could not go against his orders, but I saw he was wavering, so I took out some dollars and offered them to him. He made a fine gesture of incorruptibility, but when I came out with my next argument, that I could always be stopped at Lagahardim, the next custom-house, he succumbed. Then he took one of my men aside and intimated that he would like bakshish, but that he could not accept it before the others. Then the telephone men came up separately to crave bakshish, and I was allowed to depart.

As I approached Lagahardim I remembered that the officials there were the good friends who had made me a present of an ox, so I flattered myself that unless they bore malice for my refusal of it they would deal leniently with my lack of a passport. However, next morning a message came—"Unless you are Menelik or Ras Makonnen you cannot go by without a pass." However, I consulted with a Greek at the telephone station, and he agreed with me that I had better go on and see whether the men would attempt to stop me. There was no sign of them until, at the last moment, up came the very man

who had given me the ox. I hastened to offer him whiskey, and he grinned very amiably at me, asking when I should be ready to take over my ox. "Ah," I exclaimed, "what a pity that you did not bring it last night. Then we would have had a fine carouse. Now, alas! I am on the brink of departure, and it is too late." Then he began to say something about my passport, but I hastened to change the subject and give him dollars and more whiskey. At last he became so friendly that he insisted on making me a present of his hippopotamus-hide whip, and I heard nothing more about any objection to my departure.

My last brush with black officialdom was at Gildessa, where His Excellency the Village Governor had been so affable on my way up. After having been delayed a night by the sudden arrival of a rushing mighty river, I set out somewhat late with my sodden caravan. Assured that there were no formalities to be imposed by the customs, I rode on ahead through shrubberies of mimosa, in an atmosphere heavy with scent. The police turned out to fire a salute with ball-cartridge, and expressed gratitude for the inevitable bakshish.

I had ridden for forty minutes, and was just congratulating myself on the promise of a long march, when I was stopped by two policemen, who had come running after me to say that my camels were detained and that I must return. I refused angrily, and threatened great trouble if the caravan were not immediately released. One policeman returned with



my message ; the other stayed on to see that I did not attempt to proceed further. Presently some Abyssinians came up and advised me to return, saying that my caravan would certainly not be allowed to pass until I did so. But I was not going to add eighty unnecessary minutes to my march if I could help it, besides which I foresaw that, if I did return, I should probably come to blows with His Excellency the Village Governor, which might have serious consequences. So I despatched the Pilgrim with instructions to pay whatever bakshish might be demanded. When he reached Gildessa he found that Abdi had just succeeded in buying off the caravan. But the result was that we camped for lunch that day at Arto instead of at the next stage, and the sudden appearance of another river detained me there all night.

For a greedy, ill-conditioned rascal commend me to an Abyssinian official.

## Chapter X

### ABYSSINIAN CHRISTIANITY

The Epiphany—Raising an Altar—The Kalendar—Christmas at the Capital—Christmas Dinners—Coptic Monks—Suspicion of Foreigners—A Monastery—Harrar Cathedral—S. Mary's, Entotto—Ecclesiastical Art—Bargaining for Admission—Church Books—A Church Service—The Dance of the Priests—Rattles.

THE enemies of the old world condemn Abyssinian Christianity as a medley of grotesque savage practices attempting to reconcile themselves with the Orthodox ritual. They see nothing pious in the dances of the priests before the ark and seem to forget that such practices were applauded in the days of so Protestant a monarch as King David. They discern nothing picturesque in those wild festivals known as maskals (Holy Cross Days), celebrated with fantasias, junketings, and a large consumption of raw meat.

I shall probably make a better defence of the Coptic use by not attempting to argue, but merely relating what ceremonies I observed for myself.

On the morning of the Abyssinian Epiphany I was awaked by a strange piping song, a wail on little more than one note, accompanied by a one-stringed musical instrument not unlike the ancient lyre. I looked out and espied a bald-headed young bard twanging away

at his instrument, while a younger companion stood on one leg and chaunted interminably.

We were camping beside a pleasant stream at a place called Shonkora, some distance from a village, and I was puzzled by the large number of peasants who presently made their appearance in the early hours of the morning. I tried to account for it by the fact that here was the nearest water to the village of Balchi, some three miles away, and that every drop its inhabitants require must be fetched and carried hence. But besides water-carriers with their bright brass cans, there were many Abyssinians engaged in washing themselves and their clothes, so unusual an operation that it must betoken a high day of some sort. Others were lounging about and squatting among the rocks like great white birds. Others carried fowls or eggs or loaves of bread, as though for a market. There seemed a holiday feeling in the air ; all grinned amiably as they passed me, and many saluted me by kissing their hands and touching the ground.

Presently I noticed an old man who was engaged upon some mysterious occupation beside the stream, running to and fro and bending down laboriously from time to time. In his hand was a long fly-whisk and a crutch, both of which are regarded as insignia of the priestly office. He wore a kind of pointed turban on his head and a string of leathern amulets round his neck. I hurried out to see what he would be at, and found that he and two men were busy gathering together the biggest stones they could

carry to construct a circular altar in honour of the Epiphany. Here in the afternoon a large cross would be planted in the centre, that priests and people might dance and sing hymns. I was afraid that his Reverence might resent my curiosity, so I took great precautions to prevent him from realising that I was photographing him. But he smiled so amiably



RAISING AN ALTAR.

that I came up to watch him and put some questions. He told me that always, so far as anybody in the country knew, the priest had set up an altar there on the morning of the Epiphany. As he talked he went on plodding away after his stones, and he remarked presently that, if God had granted him to be a younger man, he would have been able to



carry much bigger stones. This suggested my helping him, so I ran about for a few minutes picking up stones and bringing them up to him for the construction of his altar. This seemed to delight him vastly, and when I started off again on my journey he insisted on accompanying me for some twenty yards, and wished me a good journey, raising his hand and invoking the name of God.

I had counted very much on reaching the capital in time for the Christmas festivities, which are among the most elaborate in the Abyssinian year. This was, however, impossible, owing to cantankerous mulemen, and partly, I must confess, to my failure in ascertaining the precise date of Christmas Day. Every book I have read about Abyssinia and every resident I have questioned has a different theory about the Kalendar. My first impression was that the Abyssinians, like the Orthodox Church, were always twelve days behind us. This was corroborated by certain dates which I verified. Then I read in Count Gleichen's book that they were seven days behind, and this he corroborated with certain dates. Various other theories were supported in a similar way, and at last I began to despair of unearthing the truth.

Now I have been told by an Abyssinian what I believe is the right explanation. Each of the Abyssinian months has precisely thirty days, and at the end of each year there are some extra days which do not belong to any particular month. The consequence is that the difference between our kalendar and theirs expands whenever we reach the end of one of our

months with thirty-one days. Moreover, their months and ours do not begin simultaneously, so much mental arithmetic is necessary to determine any given date.

Though I was not so fortunate as to reach Addis Ababa in time for Christmas, I heard full details of the festivities from those who were. The most interesting feature seems to have been the dance of priests in the presence of the Emperor. The vest-



CHRISTMAS AT ADDIS ABABA.  
(*Photograph by CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.*)

ments were very gorgeous, including yellow and purple brocaded velvets richly embroidered, and green or yellow silk coats. All the most magnificent crutches were brought out, incense was swung from copper censers, and graceful crosses of pierced metal-work were displayed. Perhaps the most striking part of the spectacle was the forest of umbrellas, green, blue, red, purple, and black, which the priests put

up rather as a part of a ceremonial display than to keep off the tropical sun. The Emperor, the two Archbishops and Captain Harrington were alone seated while the dance was in progress. It was quiet and stately, a sort of quadrille figure and minuet step. The priests advanced in two sections, the first of which bowed to the Sovereign and withdrew to a certain distance; the second section did the same, and the



MENELIK'S GUARD OUTSIDE TUKUL WHERE PRIESTS ARE DANCING.

(*Photograph by CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.*)

figure was re-formed. Two rows faced each other, with a couple of priests at each end to form a square, then set to partners and right about turn. In fact it was not unlike the famous dance of the choir-boys in Seville Cathedral, with their plumes and castanets. Both dances may have had a similar origin.

When Menelik had had enough of the performance he sent word to the priests and bade them stop, much

as I remember Prince Ferdinand doing when a pope went on preaching too long before him in a Bulgarian Church. The priests leading the way, Menelik followed on his gorgeously caparisoned mule to the banqueting hall in the Palace. There were two dinners that day for relays of five thousand people.

Oxen are killed outside and brought in with the flesh



MENELIK KEEPING CHRISTMAS.

(He is in the centre beyond the mound of hay.)

(*Photograph by CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.*)

still quivering. There are no tables, but the feasters squat about on the floor in groups. The servants hold out a joint of raw meat to each group, whereupon everybody draws his sword or dagger and slices off a piece, exhibiting himself as an expert and amazingly rapid carver. The eating of the raw meat is done very daintily. The whole piece is held in the hand and raised to the mouth, when the sword or dagger is



used to slice off a mouthful quite close to the lips. As this is done with quite a majestic wave of the weapon, the wonder is that no one slices off his nose. An Englishman who was present told me that the whole operation was not at all unpleasant to see or smell, as might be imagined, at close quarters.

I wonder why we always take so great an interest in monks. For my part, I always feel an intense curiosity to study their lives, habits, and modes of thought. It seems to me that people who voluntarily sever themselves from the world and give themselves over to a contemplative life, must be able to solve mysteries which are hidden from everybody else, and develop a character unique in its way.

One of the strangest studies in the way of character was afforded me by a Coptic monk, who used sometimes to stroll into the billiard-room of the "Lion" at Harrar. Most people were agreed that he was a spy in the service of the Government, but as that is said of nearly every intelligent Abyssinian, it would be unfair to lay too much stress upon the suggestion in his case. I am told that everything which anybody, more particularly a foreigner, does is reported, down to the minutest details, to the various authorities, whether police, political, judicial, or commercial. As very few Abyssinians understand a word of European languages, they must have recourse to guess-work, in which they are said to be extraordinarily clever. Whether or no my friend the monk was a spy, there is no doubt about it that he always knew by intuition pretty well what was being said in French or English.

He is a marvellous mimic, and one day when he had been taking off the Swiss postmaster, to everybody's delight, some one made a remark in French. The monk looked up and remarked, "I know exactly what that man said." "Well, what was it?" "This is what he said: 'I know the monk will be taking me off too directly my back is turned.'" And so it was.

The monk is a gaunt, emaciated man, with a dry, humorous face, surmounted by a white turban shaped like an Orthodox pope's hat. He is always playing with a large rosary, composed for the most part of big Venetian glass beads. He says very little, but watches everybody's face very keenly, particularly when they are speaking. After all, if a dog contrives to understand a great deal of what we say without learning our language, why should not an Abyssinian do so? As to this man, even those who are most persistent in accusing him of being a spy admit that he is conscientious, and that he reports everything truly to the best of his ability. Like all Abyssinians, he is very greedy of money, but curiously enough he does not want it for himself. Everything he receives, and I am told this often includes large sums, is handed on for the relief of the poor. He starves and pinches himself almost beyond belief, and he has never been known to refuse a request for anything he may possess. As he remarked to a Frenchman one day, he considers that anything he acquires is merely held in trust for those who may happen to need it.

My great difficulty in getting to see or know anything about the religious side of Abyssinia lay in the

fact that with one exception all my servants were Muhammadans, and that there is a strong jealousy of the alien religion throughout the country. Indeed the Abyssinians believe that they are the only Christians in the world, and they are just as incredulous about the possibility of our being co-religionists as an inhabitant of Mecca or of a village in the interior of China might be.

I remember one day when I had with great difficulty, and with the expenditure of many silver coins, obtained admission to a Coptic church near the capital, my friends and I were trying to make out for what saints the various rough frescoes were intended. This was obviously S. Sebastian, that must be S. George, and there was S. Peter with his keys. The men who were showing us round looked extremely astonished, and began whispering to each other. Presently one of them came up and asked through the interpreter how we could possibly know the names of their saints, seeing that we were certainly not Christians. I took to wearing a large gilt Abyssinian cross, but this had very little real effect in convincing people, for they assumed that I had merely bought it as a curiosity.

A few days before I reached the capital, I was lunching under the shade of a candelabra cactus, when the Pilgrim came up and told me that he had just been driven away with threats from the entrance to a monastery. This aroused my curiosity, and I sent Abdi to ask whether I might be admitted to visit it. Before he could get near to the entrance, the monks greeted him with loud cries of "Go away, go away,

you are not a Christian!" He explained that I was, and that I wanted to come in, but they only derided him and bade him be off. So then I sent my one Christian servant to talk to them again, and when he mentioned that I was an Englishman, they waived their objections. We wound our way among shrubs and entered a roofless, half-ruined amphitheatre, some fifteen feet in diameter. Inside this, huddled near the wall, were some twenty men and boys, most of them bare-headed and the rest with tattered handkerchiefs wrapped round their skulls. Beyond was one of the usual round huts, made of sticks and a thatched summer-house roof. The people in the amphitheatre rose reluctantly as I approached, and one man shook hands with me without enthusiasm. Then we passed through to the hut, and the man who had shaken hands with me pointed to the door, saying half triumphantly, "You see it is locked."

"But can't I go in?"

A consultation went on as to whether I was a Christian, and after a good deal of hesitation, they accepted with some reluctance the evidence of the cross on my watch-chain. Then they opened the door, made me pass in and stood watching to see how I should behave, most of them crowding the doorway, others gaping through little windows.

Three-quarters of the inside of the hut was taken up with a sort of sanctuary, made of stout sticks closely bound together and stretching right up to the roof. In front was a long piece of chintz, which may have concealed a doorway. Outside this was an altar-



rail of irregular sticks, and a semicircle of wood, which I suppose was intended for kneeling communicants. Against the rails were several long crutches, which in my ignorance I imagined had been contributed by lame people, to whom the saint of the place had restored the use of their legs. As a matter of fact, however, these were merely the crutches which every priest uses in the ritual of the dance. On the floor several drums lay about haphazard. They were of cylindrical shape, some two feet long and perhaps nine inches in diameter. Hanging from the ceiling by long strings were a shrivelled stuffed bird and some small bundles of wood resembling firelighters. Here the inconvenience of having Muhammadan servants came in. I asked what these things meant. Abdi translated my inquiry and received an answer, whereupon all my men exploded into loud peals of laughter. "Don't be such idiots," I said. "If you laugh like that they won't tell us anything, and I want to find out what those things mean." But it was a long time before they could recover their gravity. At last Abdi pulled himself together and blurted out between two wild peals of merriment, "He say those his God. Ha! ha! ha!" This sort of conduct was scarcely likely to conciliate the confidence of people who were already somewhat suspicious of a stranger, and it was not surprising that my hosts began to display signs of annoyance. Indeed after this it seemed useless to attempt to put any more questions. However, when I had distributed some money, I seemed to be received back again into comparative favour, though my men

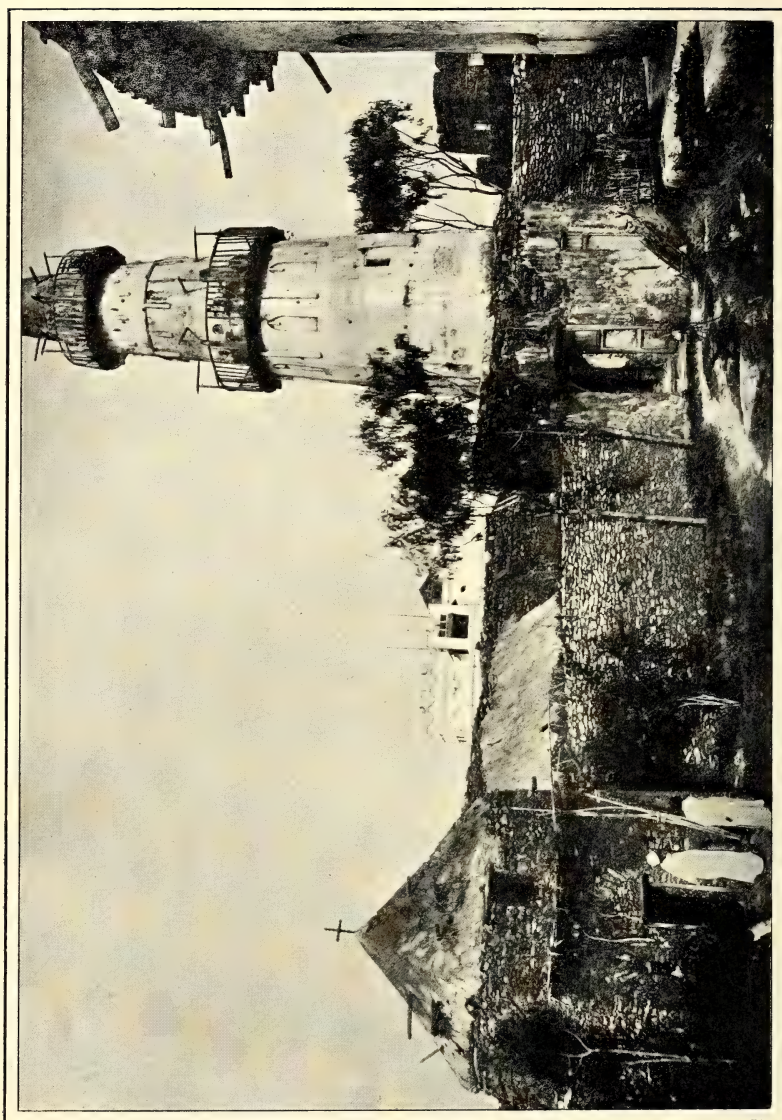
roared with laughter as they translated the compliments and thanks. "They say you their father and mother and all their relations. They say they hope their God you travel all right. Ha! ha! ha!"

As I was departing one of the chief monks came and presented me with a big flat spongy brown loaf which tasted rather good; but here my servants' bad manners became offensive again—they pointed contemptuously at the offering and emitted peal after peal of raucous laughter over it. Really the Somali sense of humour is sometimes a bit too acute.

The only real information I gleaned was that the object of the monastery is to feed and house poor people. For this purpose there were a number of huts among the trees in the background, and I noticed a variety of cripples, who hobbled about on all fours, craving for alms.

My first visit to an Abyssinian place of worship was at Harrar, where I visited a circular cathedral. It stands on one side of the great square facing the gate of Ras Makonnen's palace with its row of elephants' tails. The porch is of the dirty stone and mud architecture, and looks like a large hut, concealing the fact that there is a cathedral within. From this porch a wall starts in either direction and gives the impression that there is no possibility of thoroughfare. However, I penetrated into the porch, and made my way into a circular courtyard, which was grass-grown and impressed me as being very ill-kept. Here was the cathedral, flanked by steep, irregular steps, covered by a variety of weeds. Climbing up, I





OLD MINARET IN THE COURTYARD OF HARRAR CATHEDRAL.

(Photo by P. Mathieu.)

[To face page 279.]



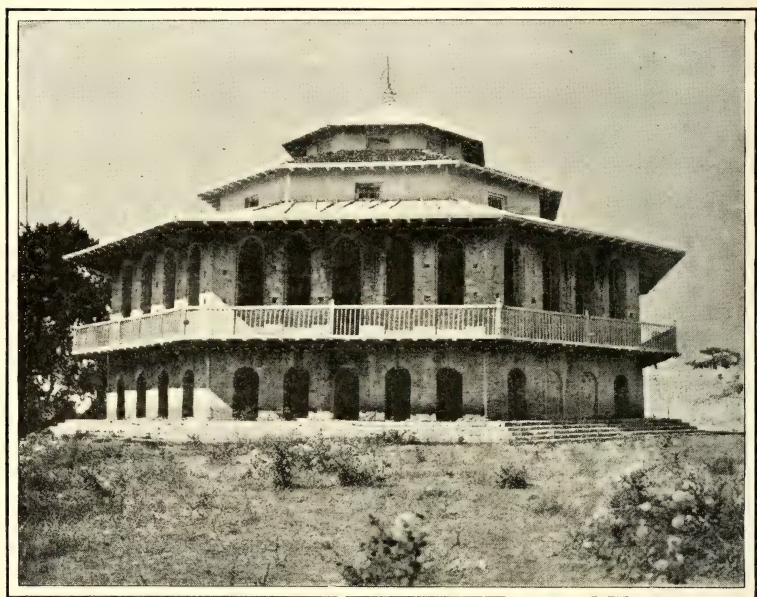
was confronted by a thick whitewashed wall with large window-openings at short intervals and some wooden doors with faded paintings and rude mosaics. The embrasures of the windows were ornamented with mediæval paintings of the saints, suggestive of the art of a schoolboy, and I noticed that most of the pictures had merely been drawn in charcoal as if with the idea of completing them at some future date. I walked all round the top step, still outside the cathedral, and noticed, crouching by the courtyard wall, a man immersed in a bright brown leather book. He was squatting on the ground all huddled up like a bag of old clothes. Presently he looked up and seemed slightly annoyed by my presence. I went on round, and was admitted through the doors, where I was confronted by another circular wall, provided with more doors, but this time with no windows. This wall was painted with some surprising leopards and lions, and a rather graceful kind of flower-pot design, which reminded me of the art of the Arabs in Tunisia. Then I was told that the custodians refused to allow me to penetrate any further that day. I came again and again, but there was always some excuse to prevent my seeing any more. Strict orders had been given that the cathedral should not be visited except during the hours of service, lest it should be desecrated by attempts at photography. Bribes and threats were alike in vain, and eventually I went away without seeing the cathedral of Harrar, where I understand there is really nothing to see. I confess I should have liked to obtain some copies of the

leopards and lions and flower-pots, and I found a clever Russian artist, who promised to copy them for me in water-colours before I returned. But the Abyssinians were too many for him, and he never succeeded in obtaining permission.

At Entotto I obtained admission to two churches, which in the days of the old capital were very flourishing but are now rarely visited except on certain saints' days. They are perched on two extremities of a steep mountain, a mile or so apart, and afford a landmark for a great distance away. My first pilgrimage was to the church of Maryam, or the Blessed Virgin. The Abyssinians who were with me hastened to kiss the floor-beam and side-posts or lintels of the door in the outer wall. Then we stepped into a long rough porch or hut, which was thick in dust and dirt. On some niches at the side I noticed what looked like large beer-glasses, which are probably used for bumpers of the national tej (mead). We passed through into the outer courtyard, broad and round, very untidy, with irregular stones and plenty of rubbish. Rough, ill-kept, grass-grown steps led up to the church itself. This possessed a fine newly thatched roof, but most of the little windows had the glass broken or entirely out. As usual the church consisted of a square holy of holies in the centre and a passage all round it for the worshippers. The holy of holies is for the priests alone, and is covered outside with paintings in vivid colours. Some of them were of the modern Italian school, while others were an attempt at this with the limitations of Abyssinian drawing and perspective.

The most interesting were the really characteristic Abyssinian works of art. Both here and in the other church of Entotto the favourite subjects were martyrdom on earth and torture in hell. Here was S. John the Baptist having his head cut off and blood streaming in great jets ; there was a wicked woman with flames sprouting up all round her, and the devil represented by an innocent-looking black baby. In this connection it is interesting to observe that all good people were represented as white and with full faces, while bad people were black and in profile. Most of the pictures contrived to drag in a crowd, all the heads being huddled together and designated by segments of circles, which grew smaller and smaller as the individuals were more remote from the foreground. I noticed a large picture of Menelik I., the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and was amused to find that he greatly resembled the present Menelik, while the Queen of Sheba was the very image of Taitu, his present Majesty's consort. And among the courtiers was one for which Ras Makonnen had been taken as model. At the other church, which is dedicated to S. Raguel, even this pretence was thrown off, and I saw a large picture of the present King and all his Court. Of course they were painted full face and with very white skins. The Abyssinians took great delight in making out which was which courtier. There was Ras Makonnen, there was Ras Michael, and so on. From the conspicuous position always allotted to Ras Makonnen, it is obvious that he is generally regarded as the probable heir to the

throne. At Maryam the paintings included several curious allegorical beasts, one of which consisted of nothing but feathers, eyes, and ears. At S. Raguel there was a very weird picture of the sick of the palsy taking up his bed and walking: an enormous iron bedstead was borne aloft and seemed to enter



CHURCH OF S. RAGUEL, ENTOTTO.

(*Photograph by W. A. M. WAKEMAN.*)

right into the head of its bearer. There were fine big silver drums on the floor in both churches.

We approached S. Raguel along the top of a ruined wall and found a fairly large ill-kept enclosure, where we had lunch. The priests in charge of the place exhibited great disinclination to let us in at all. After much talk some keys were produced,



but the priest wanted to bargain as to the price we would pay before he consented to open the door. To cut the matter short, I advanced a dollar, and all further opposition was withdrawn. We climbed some rickety wooden stairs to an upper gallery, covered with worn-out matting consisting of strips of bamboo roughly tied together. There were pictures round the holy of holies as before. S. Stephen was being stoned with huge black boulders like irregular cannon balls. My companion, the Legation doctor, was constantly asking to be allowed to see inside the holy of holies, but was told that the priest who kept the key was absent at Addis Ababa. Presently, however, another priest turned up while we were having lunch, and the doctor appealed to him. He said it was quite impossible, but on receipt of two dollars abruptly changed his mind. The custodians seemed to know very well that they were doing wrong, and displayed huge anxiety to get the thing over as quickly as possible. They hurried us up the rickety steps, opened the door of the sanctuary, took great care to keep us as far off as possible, and kept exclaiming, "Now that is all. I hope you are satisfied. Let us go away again. You ought really to give us some more dollars for what we have done." There was, however, really next to nothing to see. In the darkness I could just make out the tabernacle inside the holy of holies. It was a kind of ark, covered with cheap draperies and surmounted by a crucifix. A few lanterns lay about. That was all. At any rate that was all that we could induce the priest to show us.

I believe that wonderful illuminated missals and psalm-books exist, but I could not obtain a sight of any here. I was shown a few very ordinary printed books in Amharic, and the priests declared that they had no others. I also scoured Addis Ababa to very little purpose, finding only a few commonplace books which were being hawked about in the market-place, and some with uninteresting illuminations at a Greek curiosity shop, which has not a great reputation for the authenticity of its curiosities. I believe there are to be found in Abyssinia a considerable number of apocryphal Gospels and apocryphal books of the Old Testament, which exist nowhere else in the world. But to be able to make anything out of them it would be necessary to learn the old dead ecclesiastical language of Abyssinia, which is called Gheez and which scarcely any one but the priests knows anything about. I commend this new field of research to any enterprising pedant with plenty of time on his hands.

I was privileged to attend a service at Trinity Church close to Menelik's Palace at Addis Ababa. This meant rising very early, for the Abyssinians go to church in the small hours, and by seven in the morning they are free to amuse themselves for the rest of the day. I took with me my one Abyssinian servant, and we floundered through the stony ravines which do duty for streets in the capital at that very dark hour which proverbially precedes the dawn. After climbing the precipice up to the church I found a crowd collected outside the outer

wall. Everybody seemed to be abroad already, and I noticed that whenever a peasant approached the church on a mule he dismounted and kissed a large black stone, which stood some twenty yards away. Other persons of a more pious turn of mind went right up to the entrance, and kissed not only the lintels but even the floor-beam of the doorway. This was also done by everybody who was coming to church, and my servant, in whom I had never detected any semblance of piety on the road, was particularly punctilious in this respect.

We passed through the porch into a churchyard. There were a number of large trees under which a crowd of people sat about, looking very like birds in their national costume of white shmmas, each with a broad red band. On the whole there was a devotional quiet, no buzz of conversation, and two or three children, who seemed to be playing at hide-and-seek, were out of keeping with the general effect. My servant and I made our way into the outer passage of the circular church, where a row of men leaned against the outer wall which was only about five feet high, and another row leaned against the inner wall, which was of stone and cow-dung partly covered with pieces of cotton or chintz, more or less ragged and of all sorts of patterns. A few more people lounged about in the middle of the passage, but they were not numerous enough to cause an obstruction. The floor was covered with straw matting, and there were some faded carpets near one of the inner doors.

Here about twenty priests were gathered in two rows facing each other. The older ones had high white turbans, generally covered in at the top. This and their cast of countenance reminded me of the dancing dervishes of Constantinople. Some of the younger ones wore brown blanket cloaks such as my Somali servants had adopted since they reached the cold country, but the majority wore the ordinary dingy white shamma with its broad scarlet band. The usual attitude was to stand with one hand through the neck-hole of the garment so as to cover the mouth and clutch the handle of a long crutch, which is one of the symbols of the priestly office. One of the chief priests held a big book in his right hand and sang with his mouth and nose completely covered up. I made my way into an inner passage, but found it so crowded that I had to return. I noticed, however, that the inner wall, behind which is the holy of holies, was plastered with common European lithographs of religious subjects. There was a faint hum of chaunting within.

I returned to the neighbourhood of the twenty priests, but beyond the remote hum could not make out that anything was going on. Presently a small bell tinkled inside, and was echoed by a big bell attached to a tree in the churchyard. Many people prostrated themselves, and I imagined this was the announcement of the elevation of the Host, but the prostrations were only repeated twice and the bell went on ringing some twenty times.

Mules, some of them with gorgeous trappings, had



been left outside the churchyard, and so had Muham-madans, but guns, shields, and spears were brought in. A frequent sight was that of a big man coming in through the porch, followed by three or four retainers bearing guns. He would bow to his acquaintances under the trees, more or less deeply according to their importance. Then he stood up some ten paces away from the church door and made several deep bows almost to the earth. Having thus completed his devotions, he would retire and squat down under the trees among his friends.

Meanwhile the chaunting inside has ceased. A small boy clad in a bit of sack stands facing the inner door with his back to the priests and reads something out of a big book fluently but in rather a gabbling way and not loud enough to be heard many yards off, He is succeeded by another similar boy, who does the same thing only not so well. I fancy it is the Epistle and Gospel. Then all the priests grasp their long crutches and go through a kind of gymnastic exercise, which reminds me of the use of spears at a Somali dance. The crutches are five feet long, and must, I imagine, have originally taken their origin from spears, adapted for civilian use. The tops are either of ivory or brass, some of them elaborately carved. It is not every priest who can run to a crutch; in that case he either uses a plain staff or one with a round knob at the end. One priest acts as conductor and the others imitate his movements, all singing loudly through their noses. He is not unlike Menelik to look at, and

wears a big grin, not to express merriment but rather amiability. The crutches are held in the middle and darted at the ground, now near, now far, with a forward movement made by slightly bending the right knee. It is as though spears were being poised and aimed playfully at objects on the floor. The crutches are then lifted, crook end up, a foot into the air, they are poised, they are swung, with ever-increasing vigour. All of a sudden the whole exercise ceases without any warning whatever.

The congregation impressed me as reverent. Anybody who happened to stroll near the priests made them a deep bow, which was returned with a nod, at whatever stage in the service. Few people had prayer-books, for few can read, but many were diligently murmuring responses to the almost inaudible chaunting within. Presently a slight commotion caused me to turn my head. An old priest issued from the interior, carrying a gold-headed crutch, as though it were a mace. He was followed by a man bearing on his back a gilt chair with violet velvet seat. Next came a stout lady clad in a loose black silk overall. They proceeded in single file through the churchyard, every one rising at their passage. A boy had a red silk parasol over the lady's head, and this I knew was one of the insignia of royalty. It was Menelik's married daughter.

Now in the group I had been watching, a young priest in brown, with a stupid, ugly face, stood forward, and began a long chaunt with no sort of tune. He forgot his part from time to time and had to be

prompted either from behind or by those facing him. At last he finished, and everybody laughed at him. He was half pushed away and retreated with a sickly grin.

After an interval of over half an hour rattles were distributed. Some were of comparatively fine workmanship, but most of them mere contrivances of tin and wire. Conceive a sort of tuning-fork to begin with, and inside it a couple of wires strung with a few discs like coins. The handle was jerked slightly and carelessly to and fro so that the discs jingled, while singing went on and three big drums on the floor were patted drowsily with very flat palms. The rattles were not shaken in time as the crutches were, but anyhow, heedlessly. Then all of a sudden the whole business stopped abruptly as though every one had simultaneously become bored, the rattles were collected and stowed away on a ledge for future use.

By this time it was half-past eight, and I began to feel that I should like to break my fast. Most of the congregation seemed to be of the same opinion, for they were fast melting away from the church. On coming outside I found a large knot of people listening to a priest preaching to them under a tree. They were lolling about in all sorts of ungraceful attitudes, but appeared to be paying a good deal of attention.

On emerging through the porch, I was accosted by a beggar, who held out his two hands. From one of them was suspended a long steel chain, the other clutched two cartridges. It appears that prisoners are allowed out on Sundays and holy days to collect

money from benevolent church-goers for paying the fines or debts or blood-money, which will secure their release. A cartridge, as I have already pointed out, is current coin of the realm, being the equivalent of a twopenny piastre. Pity the poor prisoners!



## Chapter XI

### HOMEWARD HO

Engaging Mulemen—A Dilatory Departure—Wayside Amenities—  
An Ancient Mystery—Strange Rivers—A Tropical Storm—A  
Night March—White Snakes—A Night in an Open Boat—  
Jibuti—A Second Delagoa Bay—The Question of Arms—  
Obock—Perim—Somalis Transformed—The Future of Abyssinia—  
Openings for Explorers—Ziquala—Northern Abyssinia—  
The Mad Mullah

I BELIEVE I beat the record by the swiftness of my return to the coast. But at first it seemed as though I were doomed to have all the old difficulties over again. I thought I had now sufficient experience to choose my own mulemen, and, despite the advice of the Legation interpreter, I settled upon a promising gang. I made it an absolute stipulation that I should reach Harrar within eighteen days. I promised an extra dollar per mule for every day saved, and extra dollars as an inducement to my personal servants to assist in hurrying on; I paid only half the journey money in advance, and I made the head muleman sign a paper agreeing that, if we did not reach Harrar in eighteen days, he should forfeit the other half.

When the morrow came, of course there were no mulemen. I sent twice all the way to the other side

of Addis Ababa, but could get no tidings of them. At last, late in the afternoon, one of them turned up looking rather bleary-eyed, the previous day having been a high festival in honour of S. Raguel at Entotto. He had plenty of excuses as usual: his brother was dead, and seven mules were lost.

The whole day was spent in urging departure and resisting further attempts at imposition. At last, at noon on the morrow, everything seemed to be arranged, and I heaved a sigh of relief as I saw the loaded caravan depart from the compound. But a couple of hours later I found it had only gone outside the wall, and the head nagadi insisted that I should hire two more mules.

Our first march was accordingly a very short one, and next morning I learned that many of the mules had strayed, some all the way back to Addis Ababa, and that the mulemen had gone off in pursuit.

I said that we must press on with what we had, and leave some one to mind the things which could not be carried. This seemed very distasteful to everybody, but at last I persuaded one man to start with four mules which belonged to him. Then my men began to load the others themselves, taking a very long time to do so in an amateur fashion. As soon as one mule was tethered the next one would bolt. It seemed a hopeless, interminable job.

We managed to strike camp at last, but we had not gone five minutes when one of the head mulemen came running up breathless and excited, with a long, curved sword in a bright red sheath at

his side. He rushed ahead and turned all the mules back. I stopped them on my side, and we stood facing each other but unable to argue as Shirdon, the Harrari interpreter, had gone on ahead. We had to wait some fifteen minutes before he could be recalled. Then it appeared that the right loads had not been put upon the right mules, and, as those which belonged to him were overweighted, he protested. I allowed him to rearrange two or three mules and set off driving the others myself in front of me.

Abdi came to me in a very doleful frame of mind, saying that all the mules were tired and sore in the back, and that very few of them could ever reach Harrar. He advised camping two or three days where we were until we could get a fresh set of mules from Addis Ababa. I told him that I was going on even though I had to walk by myself and do without baggage. Presently the Somali buoyancy reasserted itself, and he was roaring with laughter over an amusing conversation which had taken place between Reggel, my cook, and the man with the long, curved sword.

SWORDSMAN : "By the death of Menelik, I will not start at all to-morrow. I will rest and take my ease and you shall all await my pleasure."

REGGEL : "Nay, but you shall go. We will constrain you."

SWORDSMAN : "Why, then, do I wear a sword by my side?"

REGGEL : "We have guns, many, many guns. I tie

you up with a piece of string and put a gun in your mouth."

As I passed through the forest of Kunni I beheld a brown cloak and a sheet, apparently flung down under a tree. My men gave a whoop, the sheet and the brown cloak lifted themselves as though by enchantment, and there issued forth first the grinning faces of my cook and tent-boy, then their shoulders, and finally their whole bodies. It is a convenient method of repose in a country infested by insects and not wholly innocent of snakes.

Near the top of a steep pass in the forest of Hirna, further on, I observed two stones, which at the first glimpse were identical with the brown cloak and the sheet of my two retainers. Nobody whooped, and the recumbent figures remained immovable. Methought it was a strange place to have chosen for an afternoon siesta in a flood of rain. The bodies were stretched out in the centre of a circular cairn, connected with a wall which projected half-way out into the road. I peered over to see what could have made my servants slumber so soundly, and lo! the sheet and the brown cloak had a coating of green mould which spoke of centuries. Was this an enchanted forest or the threshold of the palace of the Sleeping Beauty?

I sat down to eat my lunch in the rain, and presently I noticed a long, sluggish file of Abyssinians and donkeys making their way up the hill. On reaching the cairn, the men of the party stood up to attention beside it, removed their big felt hats, picked up each a little stone and dropped it into the enclosure. Then



they bent their heads in homage to the recumbent figures and muttered something for the space of half a minute. They donned their hats and plodded uphill. I inquired of everybody what it all meant, but my Somalis were never good interpreters. My general impression was that long, long ago, in the days of the old Abyssinians who were subject to the Queen of Sheba, there was war in this region and a man and boy were sore pursued. At last, when they were so tired that they could go no further, they lay down in their outer garments and covered themselves just as my cook and tent-boy do, and they prayed that they might be turned into stone if only they could escape from their pursuers. The God of Battles heard their prayer; and if you doubt this, there they are as a sufficient testimony unto all time.

Such is the scepticism of a Somali that he ridicules everything. Even in telling the story of these stones the Pilgrim thought it necessary to preface his translation with the words, "He make one lie and say——" What a descent is this from the hallowed words, "Once upon a time." Half the charm is destroyed by so singular a lack of imagination.

The Abyssinian mulemen and my Somali servants disputed for a while as to whether the people who had been turned into stones were Moslems or Christians, each denying it on behalf of his own religion. Out of this dispute came yet another version. "They make one lie and say" that in the very long ago there wandered into the forest of Hirna a boy and a girl, the one a Christian and the other a Moslem, and they

made a vow that they would neither drink strong drink, nor tell falsehoods, nor run after the other sex, nor do anything else which was wrong, and they prayed that they might be turned into stones if ever they broke their vow. They tarried here by the roadside, and they sinned, and their prayer was heard.

I think the rivers of East Africa surprised me as



A RIVER IN EAST AFRICA.

(*Photograph by* CAPTAIN POWELL-COTTON.)

much as anything on my surprising journey. Indeed, I vow that I should have found it difficult to believe in them unless I had actually seen them. I reached Gildessa, homeward bound, in a flood of rain, which seemed now to have become chronic. I crossed the wide, dry torrent-bed to camp away from the village and its feverish reputation, even though I intended only to remain a few hours, just time enough to

engage fresh camels. As I sat at meat within my tent I heard the roar of many waters, and Abdi rushed in to say, 'The river has come, sah'b, no one can pass over until to-morrow.'

Still I was incredulous, but I rushed out, and lo! I might almost have been beside the Rhone at Geneva. Some hundred yards of deep water separated me from



A DRY TORRENT-BED.

Gildessa, bubbling, screaming, hissing water, which bore along with it trunks of trees, great zarebas of brambles, the carcass of a sheep, and various samples of agriculture. Men stood on either side, cut off from their destination, wondering how long it might be before they could pass over. Several of my servants were thus made prisoners, and had to remain in the

village until the waters should abate. In about two hours the current was less fierce, and Somali youths began to make chains with their hands to see whether it was possible to stand against the stream. Soon they grew more venturesome and waded in alone, but I saw one carried off his legs and whirled head over heels for many yards before he could receive a helping hand. At sundown it was still hopeless to convey camels across, so I resigned myself to delay my departure until the morrow.

During the night the bed became dry again, and, after being delayed by the customs, I called for luncheon at Arto. Here was another dry bed, where, by scratching the surface, hot medicinal springs were revealed. Twelve inches below, the water was so hot that a Somali could not bear to thrust in his foot. I recalled a tale of a man at Harrar, whose skin had become horny but had been cured quickly by washing at Arto after the faculty had given up his case as hopeless. I ate my meal in an island shrubbery in the middle of the dry bed, crouching under an umbrella and doing vain battle with thousands of refugee-flies. Presently a river made its appearance in the further part of the bed. It presented a strange sight, advancing like an enormous snake with the roar of an express train. Suddenly there was a cry from my men that another flood was coming to cut me off from my camp. I had just time to rush across with my table, victuals, and other paraphernalia before it arrived. I might easily have been isolated there for the night sans food, sans tent, sans bed, sans anything.



As it was, I had to lose another day, remaining at Arto till the morrow.

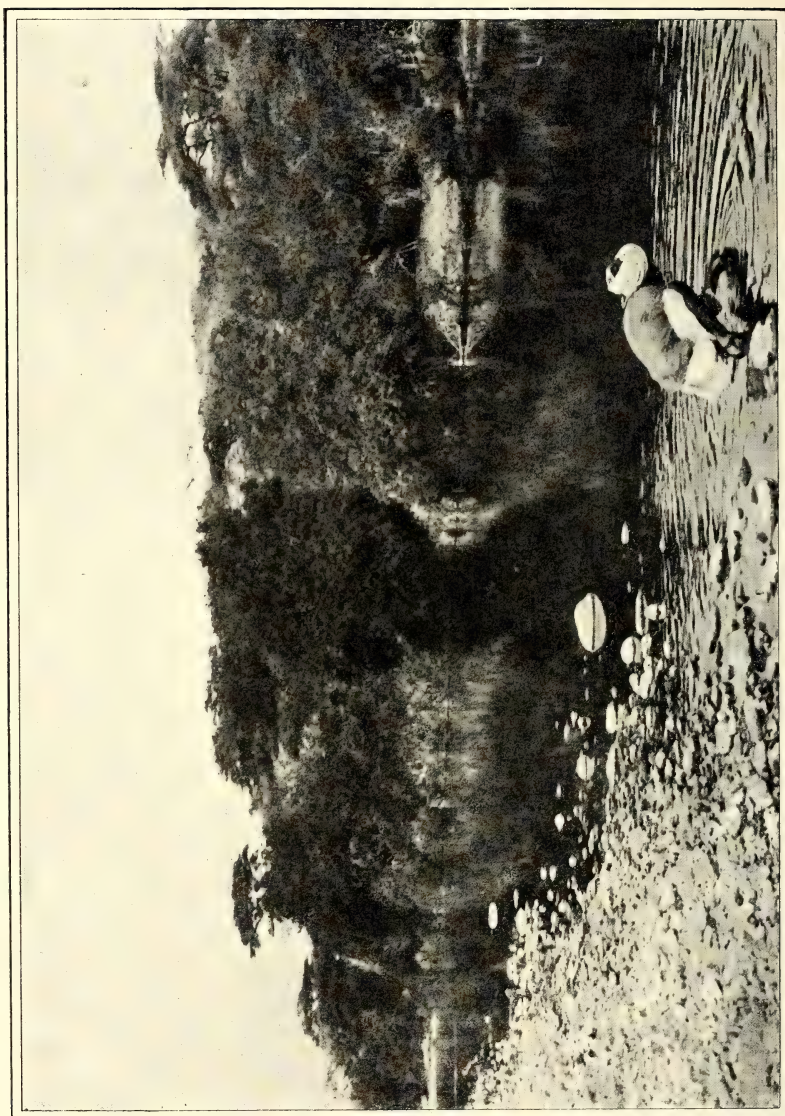
At the next midday camp I met a party of Germans and dallied with them too long over lunch. The result was that darkness overtook me in the midst of a wilderness of boulders. It seemed impossible to proceed, so I sat down and sent on a couple of men to fetch a lantern from the camp, which I had ordered to be pitched on the other side of Dabbas, the next river-bed, for I vowed I was not going to risk being cut off again. After the men had gone on a little way they shouted that the boulders were ended, so I plodded on, dog-tired, at less than a foot's pace. It was a huge relief when at last I reached Dabbas and entered the river-bed. I heard loud shouts from my camp on the other side, and imagined it was the usual interchange of Somali amenities, but the Pilgrim said we were being urged to hurry on, as a river was coming. I laughed this to scorn and dallied obstinately, though when we were half-way the cries became more urgent. When I came into camp just across the bed, I was beginning to chaff Abdi about his wild idea that a river could come so swiftly, when I heard a sound like that of a train in the distance. It gathered volume very quickly, and in less than five minutes the whole bed was full of a surging, roaring torrent, fully thirty yards broad. Had I lingered yet a little while among the boulders I should have had to spend the night dinnerless and without a roof to my head, perhaps even unable to pass over next morning, for the river seemed as

vigorous as ever when I departed. Next day at lunch I met an agreeable American, who was reminded (of course) of Mark Twain by my narration of the river. He had some tale of a man driving along a dry river-bed in a buggy (I am sure it was a buggy) while his dog swam in a river behind him.

I am told that rivers are much the same in South Africa, and that the army service regulations forbid camping in a river-bed, however dry and tempting it may appear. The fact is, so sudden and vehement are African storms, that you may have lived in a drought for weeks, and then, hey presto! a flood is upon you, having travelled perhaps some fifty miles from storm-struck hills.

I had myself some slight experience of tropical storms. As I was dining one evening at Goda-burka, I heard a volley fired close to my tent, and the Pilgrim asked me if I heard "the shouting." I thought he meant shooting, and asked what it was for. He said the shooting was to warn off some hyenas which were prowling far too near to the mules, but that he was talking about shouting. "Hark! there it is!" and I heard the low growl of thunder among the distant hills. "Soon he come with much water," said the Pilgrim. And indeed "he" did. With scarcely any further warning a great storm burst upon us. Two men, glad of the excuse for taking shelter, rushed in to hold up my tent-pole and could scarcely support it. The white Cabul cooking-tent had already been rolled up and thrown down in a heap by the first gust of wind and rain.





TADECHAMALKA.  
(Photograph by the Author.)

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The sensations inside my tent were strange, and I could almost understand the alarm on the faces of my men. The air tingled with electricity. There was a sound as though the canvas were being lashed with Titanic flails. Then came the cracking of artillery, a sharp fusillade which lasted for an hour and a quarter. The grimness of the men's faces softened a little when I lit a cigarette, though I think they thought it somewhat disrespectful to the elements. Then I curled myself up in my chair and fell asleep. It was a mighty storm, but there are few things which can murder sleep after a day's march in Abyssinia.

After the first hesitation of departure the mulemen seemed to be almost as zealous to get back to Harrar as I could be myself. Particularly when we drew near to the stretch of desert between Tadechamalka and the Hawash river, their old fears lent wings to their feet. The day before they had talked of night marches, and of course I agreed to them—anything to reach home quickly—but I had small hopes of their really meaning business. Leaving my camp at daybreak I reached the banks of the beautiful river at Tadechamalka in a few hours, and we waited there all through the hot part of the day to collect our strength for the long rush over the desert. The mulemen seemed loth to push on and whispered with each other about the dangers which confronted them. But at 2.30 I grew tired of waiting and resolved to press on in advance—a thing I rarely did, lest my caravan should make some excuse for not catching me up. At four o'clock I espied a

very fine oryx with horns fully two feet long, and started in pursuit. Directly I reached the top of one hill he would disappear over the next, and I could only get very long shots at four and five hundred yards. He led me a pretty dance, first a long way to the right of the road, and then over very stony ground far away to the left. As the hour for sunset approached the beast disappeared over the horizon and I plodded back to my mule almost dead beat. There was not a vestige of shade anywhere, and I had to crouch under an old cotton umbrella by the roadside to quaff cold tea in the intervals of persecution by the flies. Hour after hour went by, the darkness spread over the desert and the stars came out, but there was still no sign of my caravan. The shikari and syce set to work to shout, "Abdi-oo-oo-oo-oo, Reggel-oo-oo-oo-oo," but no response came. It is very remarkable how Somalis and Abyssinians are able to converse at long distances. Whenever we or the caravan seemed to have strayed, and whenever we approached the camp, recourse was always had to this system of shouting, and presently a faint echo would pipe out of the darkness, and be the prelude to a telephonic conversation.

At last the quick ear of my men detected a movement in the distance, and presently the vanguard of three or four mules put in an appearance. Their drivers were for taking no notice of me and going straight on ahead, but I insisted on their making a halt for me to dine. They were very reluctant about this and talked of the dangers of the desert and the

necessity of pressing forward, quite forgetful of the fact that they had started from Tadechamalka much later than they promised. When the others arrived there were further expostulations and expressions of surprise at my having stopped so soon. All the mulemen united in imploring me to go on at all costs, lest we should be attacked by wild men or wild beasts. The cook and Abdi alone joined in my merriment over these groundless alarms. "They plenty 'fraid," said Reggel ; "when I go fetch some wood away from the road, they say to me, If you go there you get killed. But I say, I just going to see whether I can get killed that way."

It was already nearly nine o'clock, and I refused to stir until I had some dinner. None of the men liked the delay, but when they saw that I was determined they gave in with a good grace, the three cooking stones were collected, and soon I was discussing soup and roast mutton in the starlight. Then I lay down on the ground for forty winks, and told Abdi not to wake me until the very last moment for departure. With their usual contrariness, these people who had wished to press on at all costs at nine o'clock were now in no hurry when they had settled down to rest, and it was midnight before I was waked by Abdi's voice in my ear.

It was a pitch black night, and even when we were accustomed to the darkness it was impossible to see more than a yard or two ahead. The caravan kept all together, I leading the way with the shikari holding a lantern immediately under my mule's nose.

Looking back I could just make out the other lantern, dancing about like a will-o'-the-wisp at the extreme rear. The whole effect was extraordinarily weird, with the gaunt forms looming out of the darkness, pails jangling, spears bristling on every hand. Nearly every one kept silence all through the night, save for an occasional snatch of song, which was instantly hushed. We might have been a ghostly army stealing forward to surprise a town.

On, on, on : I have never known anything that seemed quite so endless. I would cling to my mule until I began to nod and fear that, falling asleep, I might fall off. Then I would walk for a while to keep awake, though the road was very rough and the dim light of the lantern did not always save my feet from nasty knocks. So soon as I was a little less sleepy I would mount again until drowsiness overcame me once more. As we proceeded the changes from riding to walking and walking to riding became more and more frequent. I only allowed myself two intervals of rest, five minutes each, all through the night, for I knew that if once I gave in, the effort of starting on again would only be the more distasteful.

The false dawn shivered over the sky, the stars grew pale like candles in daylight and then suddenly seemed to go out, the sun straight in front of us made its presence felt behind a big purple cloud upon the horizon. We were now close to the Hawash river and the desert was practically at an end. I had earned a rest, and must wait to see where my laggard caravan intended to camp. So I stretched myself out



against a tuft of wiry brown grass by the roadside and called for a little refreshment.

At intervals various detachments of my caravan made their appearance, all bearing traces of having been up all night. Gradually I became less and less distinctly aware of their various identities, and presently I dropped off into the very sweetest hour's sleep I have ever enjoyed. Then the sun began to beat upon me, and I realised that I had better press on to the camp before it grew too hot. I expected that after fording the Hawash, by no means a pleasant operation with a mule lurching over slippery stones in deep water, I should find that my camp had been pitched ; but a spirit of energy had suddenly taken hold of everybody, and it was not until eleven o'clock that my tent was pitched by the waters of Kachinwaha. It was nearly thirty hours since I had been in a bed, and fully half of these had been spent on the actual march. I had a great longing for rest, but this the flies would not permit at any price, so I was for starting on again in the afternoon. But by now the energy of the mulemen had evaporated, and I had to leave them to their heavy slumbers all through the day. So nothing very much had been gained by the night march, as we had simply crowded into a day and a night the work of two days, and then given most of the second day to recovering from our effort.

Again at the very end of my journey I indulged in an all-night march through the old waterless desert which fringes the coast. This time we had a moon and the road was not nearly so rough, but I did not

like it so well owing to the presence of countless fat white snakes about a foot long which lay about on the road. Every now and then one of my Somalis would jump aside suddenly, grasp his staff or pick up a stone, and kill one of these snakes with a quick strong blow. As they all had bare feet they ran considerable danger, and I was told that a bite from one of these snakes meant certain death within three minutes. As for myself, I was safe on my mule and even when walking with the protection of my boots and gaiters, but I had considerable hesitation about lying down, however much I might need a rest. It was only after sunrise that the snakes disappeared, and I could allow myself the luxury of a sound sleep on the sand beside the road. I was awakened by violent rain, which I learned had been douching me for at least half an hour, and I congratulated myself upon the robustness with which my journey had endowed me to enable me to stand hardships of this kind.

Perhaps the last lap was the longest of any. I had expected to take only two or three hours from Warabot, where I had pitched my first camp, to Zaila, but every one was utterly exhausted, my mule perhaps most of any, and the drenching rain assisted in damping our ardour.

Over the plain I espied glistening white houses, details grew more distinct, there was the flagstaff of the Consulate, something shivered—thalatta, thalatta, the sea! the sea! El hamdou lillah! hurrah! the long pilgrimage was over.

My friend Mr. Harold, the Consul at Zaila, might

be described as a Job's comforter. When I was about to plunge into the desert, full of misgivings as to the hardships which might be in store, he sat at lunch with a twinkle in his eye and poured forth all the most appalling stories he could think of about travellers who had died of sunstroke, been eaten up by vultures and hyenas, or speared by Somali braves. Now that I was taking my farewell dinner with him before setting out for Jibuti in an open boat and fancied I might easily have a very bad time, he amused himself in the same old mischievous way.

When I returned rejoicing to Zaila, throwing up my hat at the sight of the sea and crossing myself with satisfaction over the termination of all my labours, everything seemed arranged for the best in this best of all possible worlds. I was even to be spared the passage on the rickety Parsee boat, about whose discomforts I had heard so much, for by a lucky chance a Royal Indian Marine Ship was again due with a convoy of troops. I flattered myself that I was now almost amid the delights of the Garden of Aden once more.

Suddenly, however, the cup was dashed from my lips. The Consul came in to breakfast with a very long face. The Parsee boat had arrived flying a yellow flag. There was plague at Aden; he could allow no one to land until he had thought out the question of quarantine. The mails must be fumigated; altogether what a to-do! It was out of the question for me to go to Aden, for I should be stranded there indefinitely. The P. and O. people were declining to

book homeward passengers from Aden, lest they should thereby lose their pratique, and the only way home would be by travelling out to India and back again, which to the ordinary mind suggested the frying-pan and the fire.

Well, what was I to do? The resources of Zaila would soon be exhausted, and a summer there would not be precisely hilarious. Happy thought: why not run over to Jibuti and collect a few impressions of one more French colony? It was true that I should have to travel all night in an open native boat, but that would be one more experience wherewith to delight my readers.

The more I thought about it, as the time for departure drew near, the less I liked it. The boat was ready, my baggage and my two last remaining servants were on board, and messages reached me every few minutes begging me to hurry up as the wind was now particularly favourable. Still I dallied over my dinner, I accepted one more whiskey and sparklet, I must finish one more cigar: there was no end to my excuses. And the Consul lay back in his Indian lounge chair in the smoking-room, magnifying the perils of the deep.

These Somali boats were really very wretched, unseaworthy craft. Once upon a time he had sent some of Colonel Sadler's servants over to Aden in one of them, but after trying for two months to get there, they came back in despair. They had drifted on to the Arabian coast, but on trying to land were menaced by the natives and thankful to get off with



their lives. Meanwhile the Colonel was clamouring for his servants, and everybody had come to the conclusion that the poor fellows must have been eaten up by sharks. Sharks? Yes, indeed, they swarmed in these waters. A soldier bathing at Aden was carried off to sea, and only rescued minus two legs and one arm. Another man climbing up a ladder out of the water felt a sudden tug at his leg but held on like grim death. His friends in the boat helped him in only to find that one of his legs had been bitten off. A man washing his shirt in quite shallow water felt a tug at the shirt and then lost both the shirt and an arm. Imagine the horror of a fight with a shark in the water! What utter helplessness: the shark drags you under, bites off a leg, and lets you struggle up to the surface. Then he comes and drags you down again and takes off an arm, and so on. It is like a cat playing with a mouse.

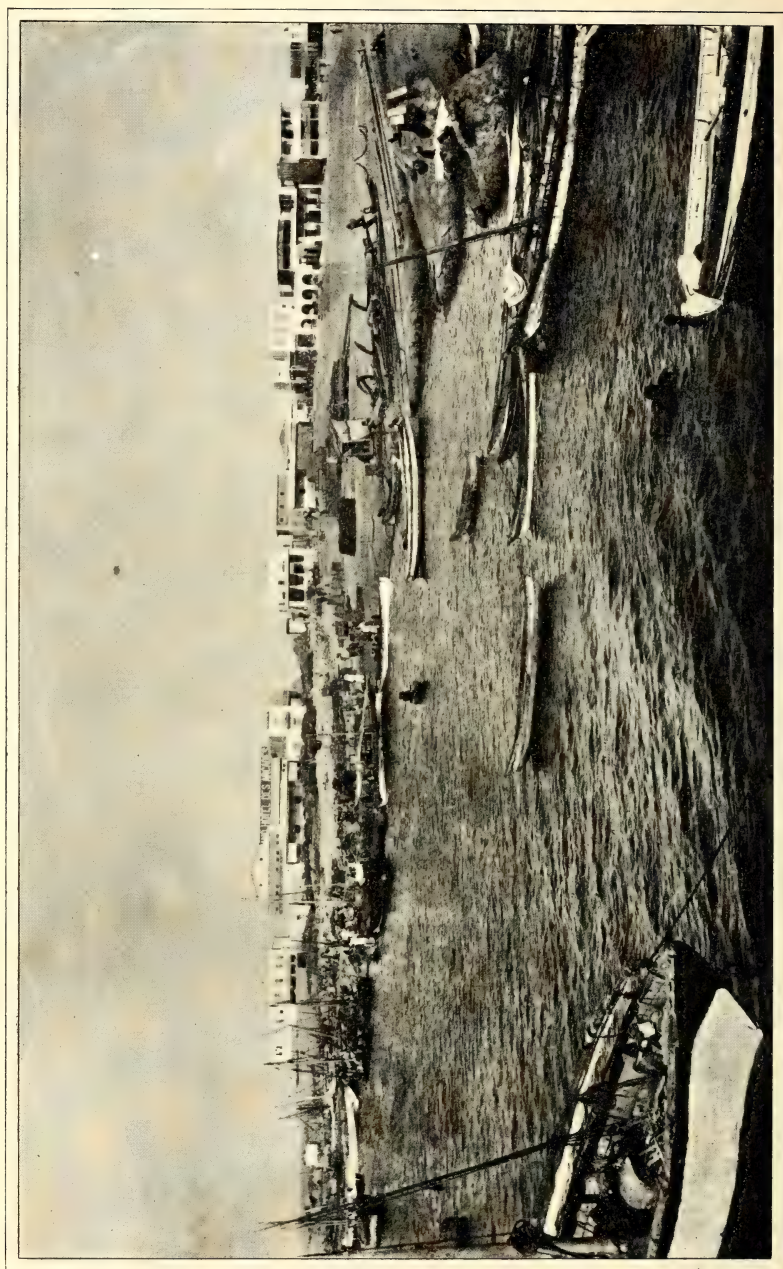
At half-past ten I took a reluctant leave, and made my way down to the landing-stage through deep pitch darkness. At the end of the pier I found the landing-chair waiting for me. Four Somali boys grasped the poles, I lurched into the chair, shouted a last goodbye to my friends, and the boys began to plod out to sea through a darkness which might be felt. Never could I have imagined so weird a sensation. The boys seemed to find me very heavy, for the chair rolled and lurched unpleasantly. How would it be if I were suddenly dropped into the water? All the Consul's stories of sharks came to my mind, and I also reflected how

they are in the habit of attacking the Somali divers at Aden. I pictured to myself how promptly I should be dropped with my chair if the bearers were suddenly confronted by a big grey fin. The fearful darkness would add to the horror of the situation. The water became deeper and deeper, yet still there was no sign of my boat. It was like walking straight out to sea to commit a neurotic suicide. Two or three supernumerary boys were running along unsteadily beside my chair, wondering how soon they might have to begin to swim. Suddenly one of them touched my legs to suggest that I should not dangle them too low and tempt the sharks.

At last, all of a sudden, the boat loomed out of the darkness immediately in front of me. It was a kind of big, flat, heavy barge, with a great cumbrous sail. The task of scrambling in from my chair was not an easy one, but many black hands were stretched forth from the darkness, and somehow or other it was accomplished. My mattress and pillows and blankets had been arranged in the stern, and after paying off the bearers I expected that we should be off.

But half an hour passed by, three-quarters, and more without the sign of a move. In fact it looked very much as though the sailors were composing themselves to sleep. My inquiries were politely set aside, until at length I was informed with some reluctance that there was too much wind, and that in any case the captain was afraid to travel by night. I asked why he had not said so before, but he replied that I had given orders to start at night and he had





JIBUTI.

(Photo by P. Mathieu.)

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been afraid to disobey them. This is the Somali character all over.

He suggested that, if I preferred, I might go back to shore and return in the early morning. But I was not inclined to tempt the sharks again, so I remained rocking at anchor until dawn. It could not be described as a particularly comfortable night. The rolling of the boat never ceased, and indeed sometimes it appeared as though we might capsize sideways into the water. My black crew became as nearly pale as is possible for a negro, and my poor little baby gazelle bleated piteously at intervals in its basket.

At last the great sail was deliberately moved about at the imminent risk of whacking me over the head, and we were off. We went fairly well for some time. Then the wind dropped, and we paddled very slowly for hours, generally keeping fairly near the low, uninteresting coast. Hour after hour went by, and I vowed that the journey was even more monotonous and interminable than any I had undergone in the desert.

I espied the white houses of Jibuti, rather fine in outline, and I imagined that I should soon be there. Having expected to arrive in the early morning, I had unwisely brought no provisions, and the wolf was gnawing within me. We had to go a great way round to reach the entrance to the harbour, and only neared the landing-stage at half-past one in the afternoon. On one of the houses I saw written up in gigantic characters, HOTEL DES ARCADES, and I rejoiced at the prospect of a meal.

But all of a sudden there was a loud cry from a small tug which advanced rapidly towards us flying a yellow flag. A negro in a gorgeous uniform had been sent out to warn us not to attempt to land until we had been inspected by the quarantine doctor. The tug darted about hither and thither to all parts of the harbour giving similar warnings to other arrivals. Soon we were quite a little flotilla of prisoners, waiting impatiently beneath a burning sun. Two hours passed without a sign of the doctor—the two longest hours I have ever known—and by this time I was absolutely famished.

A boat drew up at the landing-stage, a white man in full uniform was helped in very deliberately by a retinue of blacks, oars were produced, and the boat advanced flying a French tricolour in front and a yellow flag behind. The doctor was evidently annoyed at being disturbed, and his manners were decidedly French, which is to say scanty. He cross-questioned the captain and me in a bullying tone, informed me that I had come from a suspect port, and made a great grievance of the fact that my two servants had not been set down in the ship's manifest.

"Tell them," he said to his interpreter, "that if they commit these irregularities again I will blank them into quarantine for ten days."

Oh, the joy of breaking my fast with fresh rolls and milk coffee, even at five o'clock in the afternoon!

Considering all things, Jibuti is a plausible place. There are big wide streets and big white houses. As you approach from the sea it looks quite civilised.

The shops contain a better variety than is usually to be found in a French colony. There was even a bank there until recently, but when I started out to change some money I found that it had put up its shutters. The hotels, too, are not impossible ; at least they are no worse than those at Aden. There is a native quarter of straw huts, but it does not predominate ;



ABDI AT JIBUTI.

indeed, you are scarcely aware of it until you chance to stroll into its midst. On all hands are evidences of prosperity, and if ever the French railway, which has been started hence into the interior, comes to anything, Jibuti will be one of the most prosperous ports in Africa.

The present signs of prosperity are largely artificial.

Whereas the whole of British Somaliland is administered by four Englishmen, the little French settlement of Jibuti is swamped by whole armies of officials and camp-followers. It is for their needs that this ambitious town has been called into being, and has choked, swamped, and utterly overshadowed the poor little native village which existed of old. Far from proving prosperity, the magnificence of Jibuti costs the French Government a pretty penny, and affords an instructive contrast to the self-supporting British colony hard by. No doubt a Frenchman would reply that all this is only an investment, destined to make a very handsome return, both commercial and political, when the railway shall have developed the interior. But this may be dismissed with the quotation of their own proverb, "He laughs most heartily who laughs last."

We are too prone to dismiss as unimportant the small beginnings of our rivals in places with which we are but vaguely familiar. "Oh, another little railway into Africa," we say; "after all, it will probably help on civilisation." That was the kind of tone inspired by the Delagoa Bay Railway, and we have had reason to rue our neglect. If we submit to the completion of this railway into Abyssinia, we shall either have to fight for it and confiscate it, or else undergo a great national disaster.

To begin with, our faithful Somalis, who live upon the hire of their camels for the transport of merchandise, will be reduced to beggary. A camel cannot compete with a railway any more than a cow can.



The thriving little town of Zaila will cease to be visited ; indeed already many of the merchants there are abandoning their houses and migrating to Jibuti. More important still, Aden itself will lose the greater part of its African trade and sink into a coaling station of secondary importance, merchantmen and liners will prefer Jibuti as a port of call, and French influence will replace our own.

What French influence means is best illustrated by a reference to the recent trade of Jibuti. This, it will be found, depends almost entirely upon the supply of arms to the natives. The Geneva Convention and the obvious duty of white men forbid this all over the world. The Abyssinians having, for some mysterious reason, been admitted as signatories to the Geneva Convention, are allowed to have fire-arms, and naturally wish to prevent other blacks from enjoying the same privilege. Whether they will be able to continue doing so after the completion of this railway by the French is very doubtful. Already the French themselves have had to suffer the consequences of their own indiscretion, and their engineering operations have been hampered incessantly by the recklessness and violence of the natives whom French traders have supplied with guns. To contemplate the possibility of the importation being extended to the whole of the interior of North-East Africa is to contemplate a frightful menace to the domination of the white races.

And against whom do the Abyssinians need arms ? They have already quite sufficient for their own local

needs and the control of subject races. Of course the idea of the French has been to arm Menelik against England, and at the time of Fashoda they actually flattered themselves that he was on the point of sending out an army to support Marchand. They now realise that he is unlikely ever to assume the offensive, but they go on sending arms, and they hope that after his death there will be a period of anarchy, which will provide them with an excuse for stepping in and utilising their own imports.

Menelik has always taken a great interest in fire-arms, and one of his chief ambitions is to possess artillery. It was largely to gratify this that he gave the concession at all, and he has probably imposed onerous conditions as to the free transport of his own merchandise. As he is essentially a merchant prince, he is certain to take advantage of this to an extent which would in any case make profit for the shareholders out of the question.

But even if Menelik had made no such stipulation, the shareholders are still bound to lose their money. Enormous sums have been lavished upon the construction of the line and the fifty or sixty miles now complete have been very well and at the same time very expensively constructed. But as the company has been some four years over this, and the greater part of the ground covered is easy level country, fully a generation or two must elapse, and millions of money be spent before the line can ever be complete. Indeed people have already begun to dub the enterprise "a small Panama."

Even if it were completed, whence are adequate returns to come? The trade of Harrar is now at its zenith and even by securing that the railway would not make a decent profit. Every year more and more of the trade of Harrar is being diverted into other directions. All the important Abyssinian merchants have already begun to take the route by Gallabat, which is likely to be the junction of the railway along the Blue Nile from Khartoum. The Kassala-Suakim railway, when finished, will also divert a great deal of trade. Experts on the spot assure me that in two or three years the Harrar trade will be simply a local one, amounting at the outside to one-fourth or one-fifth of its present insufficient amount.

This is the commercial aspect of the railway. Unless the French Government steps in, the line can never be completed, and the only reason likely to induce the French Government to do so is to obtain a political foothold in Abyssinia. It is, however, realising more and more every day the hopelessness of such an aspiration, and as it has not intervened ere this, it is unlikely to attempt to do so at the eleventh hour. But whether it does or does not intervene, the shareholders are still bound to lose their money. French officials are always ready to admit that they care a great deal about politics and very little about trade, and it has never been their wont to put themselves out to advance the commerce of their compatriots, except as an accident in the details of their high policy.

My conclusion, then, is that, for the sake of our Somali subjects, for the sake of Aden, and for the sake of our prestige in North-East Africa, we must do our best to thwart a commercial railway, which can only impoverish its shareholders; and that, for the security of our Soudanese Empire and of our future good relations with Abyssinia, the French Government must be given clearly to understand that no further encroachments and illicit importation of arms will be tolerated here for the future.

Meanwhile we should push on our own railways into Abyssinia from the west, and construct the line from Berbera to Jigjiga, which would tap all the commerce of the rich tracts of country to the south of the Abyssinian capital.

As to the plan of campaign to be undertaken, it would be rash to put our enemies on the alert. One simple and obvious stroke would be to induce Menelik to revoke his concession for the French railway. This he could easily do on the ground that it has not been finished within the specified time. I am of opinion that we ought to become possessed of French Somaliland either by purchase, or, better still, if the promised war comes, by conquest. In the hands of the French it can never come to anything, but may cause us a good deal of unnecessary annoyance.

I have been informed on good authority that the French, despairing for the future of their railway, might be induced to exchange it for some of our territory in West Africa. This deserves the attention of the Foreign Office, but I am inclined to



fancy that a very hard bargain would be driven. Considering how seriously they have set to work to obtain this foothold at the avenue to Abyssinia, and how loudly they have boasted about it, it would be a great confession of failure if the French sacrificed it all cheaply.

They began by creeping into Obock, which is situated on the other side of the bay from Jibuti. Here they started their usual paraphernalia of officials and buildings, but they soon found that Obock led nowhere, controlled nothing, and could never be made even into a decent coaling station. So after a while they cast about and established a dependency of Obock at Jibuti, where they have been able to construct an excellent harbour and conjure up visions of one successful colony at last, and that colony at the entrance to an empire which may one day produce incalculable riches. What an excellent answer, they fondly imagine, Jibuti may be to Aden.

The idea of controlling both ends of the Red Sea has always been a favourite one with French politicians. Their failure to secure the sole control of the Suez Canal made them feel very sore, and one fine day it occurred to some official in Paris to look at a map and discover the existence of a barren, derelict island called Perim, almost in the middle of the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb. The story of the attempt of the French to instal themselves there is amusing.

It appears that Perim had once upon a time belonged to England, but so ungrateful was the soil, so unpopular the station, and apparently so unneces-

sary the occupation of an island where we had no rivalry to fear from anybody, that it was quietly abandoned. Accordingly, it was in the power of any nation who chose to appropriate it. It would have been a moot point in international law, whether we should have had any right to protest against the seizure of an island where we had not troubled to maintain effective possession. So a French lieutenant set out in a gunboat to hoist the tricolour upon the highest rock in Perim. On his way he landed at Aden, and went up to pay his respects, like a polite Frenchman, to the General. He was invited to dinner, and the small hours of the morning found him still sipping long drinks in a long chair in the pretty courtyard of the residency. Aden is one of the thirstiest places in the world, and the lieutenant soon became confidential. The General redoubled his amiability and insisted upon further refreshments, snatching only a couple of minutes to send off a message to the captain of a Royal Indian Marine Ship in the harbour.

The next day the lieutenant woke up with a bad headache and set out in his gunboat to take possession of Perim. What, then, was his mortification, when he arrived there to find the Union Jack already floating from the topmost peak, and to be asked by the roguish captain of the Indian ship what refreshment he would be pleased to accept on British soil.

There is another little anecdote about Perim which I cannot refrain from quoting here. Having annexed the island once more, we were bound to put in a

garrison, and various Aden subalterns had to take it in turn to act as Governor for a year. They hated it horribly, and counted the hours until their term of exile should be ended. One fine day, however, the War Office was amazed to find that a subaltern, whose year had expired, applied to have it renewed. He seemed to have done his work very well there, for his reports had come in with unfailing regularity, and as no one else wanted to take his place his desire to remain was cordially welcomed. The next year the same thing happened, and the War Office was still more surprised. At last, however, after this had gone on for five years, surprise gave way to suspicion, and some one was despatched to find out what could possibly be the motive for so persistent an appreciation of so impossible a post. Then the fat was in the fire, for the Governor of Perim was eventually unearthed at his club in Piccadilly, from which during all this time he had posted his despatches to be sent home again from Perim to the War Office.

What most impressed me at Jibuti was the extraordinary change in the behaviour of the natives. At Aden, at Zaila, even in the depths of the desert, the Somalis were always amiable and respectful. Here men of the very same tribes might have belonged to an utterly different race. To them the European seemed a general butt, provided by Providence for their special diversions.

I had scarcely landed when a crowd of youths danced mockingly around me, clamouring for bakshish. In spite of my threatening stick, they trod on my

heels all the way to the hotel, where they made sallies into the verandah while I was drinking my coffee. During my whole stay at the place I was subjected to every kind of annoyance wherever I went, and I was told by French residents that if I had struck one of my persecutors I should have been had up in the police-court and made to pay a heavy fine. When I was actually leaving, the Somali who had brought some of my luggage on board clamoured for payment almost before I had had time to discover my cabin. As I was putting my hand into my pocket to satisfy him, he stared rudely at me and said, "*Abaos*." It was, of course, long odds against an Englishman coming on board a liner at Jibuti knowing a word of Somali, and the fellow probably flattered himself that he was quite safe in insulting me in his own language, and that his having done so would amuse all his friends for a long time to come. I had, however, been long enough amongst Somalis to know that this was the rudest word in their vocabulary, and that when they applied it to each other it generally meant bloodshed. So I put back the coins I had intended to give him, found out the fellow's name, and entrusted the landlord of the hotel, who was seeing me off, with a formal protest to be laid before the police. What happened afterwards I never heard.

It was indeed heart-breaking to find my dear Somalis transformed in this way, and I think that nothing in all my experience of Frenchmen and French colonies has ever convinced me so conclusively of the hopeless incapacity of the modern Frenchman as a



ruler of men. If this was the result of a few years' contact with the most charming of blacks, how would France fare if she were set to deal with less prepossessing subjects?

Most people only know Abyssinia as a pawn in the great game of international politics, so something must be said as to the present state of affairs. This seems to have been very bad until quite recently. The French and Russians, having a far keener nose than ourselves for a good thing in politics, set to work very early to obtain a foothold in a country which might easily become a menace to our operations in Egypt and the Soudan. We were further handicapped by an alleged alliance with Italy, whom we had certainly encouraged in her predatory attitude against the Negus. Italy having failed, a disposition to associate us with her failure discounted us still further. Then came the Rennell Rodd mission to Menelik, which has been described more or less superficially by Count Gleichen in his book. I am inclined to consider that this mission was regarded as a failure at the time, for Menelik had then been taught by our enemies to think little of England, and he saw no reason for acceding to any concessions. He may have made vague, general professions of friendship, but we certainly obtained nothing more, and in return we somewhat weakly agreed to a fresh delimitation of the frontiers, whereby we abandoned to Abyssinia not merely our ancient claim to Harrar, but also the greater part of British Somaliland. It remains a disputed point whether or no Somaliland,

with its wide stretches of desert and restless nomadic population, was worth retaining. Judging from the success of the Somali coast administration and its effect upon British prestige throughout North-East Africa, I am disposed to think that we were mistaken in abandoning the territory. We certainly wronged those of our Somali subjects who had loyally supported our Government when we transferred them without any desire on their part to the alien rule of the Negus.

But the mission was not altogether in vain, seeing that it paved the way for a permanent diplomatic agency, which, by the sagacity of Captain Harrington, has raised England to a position equal, if not superior, to that of her rivals in the eyes of Abyssinia. Flags show which way the wind blows, and it is significant that at Harrar the French and Russians have vainly craved leave to hoist their standards, while the British flag floats regularly as a matter of course over the British Consular Agency.

Menelik is not insensible to blarney, and for some time he believed that the French were really very agreeable people, but he grew tired of them when he found how little they were to be trusted and how unscrupulous they were in securing an advantage over their rivals, however mean and temporary it might be. Thus, for instance, at the time of the fall of Khartoum, they sent up news to him that 16,000 English had been killed and the rest of our army put to rout. When, a day or so later, the news came to him that we had only lost 323 men and that we had taken Khartoum,

he exclaimed, "What liars these French are!" and he vowed he would never believe them again.

On the other hand, in dealing with Englishmen he has felt, as even our worst enemies do, that, whatever our other shortcomings, we may be trusted. This is undoubtedly one of the main reasons of the permanence of our success in the world, and more than counterbalances that inability to fawn and squirm, which has earned us the dislike of the dregs of Europe.

There have been so many rumours about the intentions of Abyssinia, whenever certain foreign newspapers have been hard up for a sensation, that the average reader knows not what to believe. One day we hear that Menelik is prepared to accept a Russian protectorate, being persuaded that Russia is so far off that she can never seriously interfere with him; then we are told that England and Italy are meditating a raid into Abyssinia, which they propose to partition; or Menelik is about to seize some opportunity of embarrassing us by invading the Soudan at the head of 40,000 men.

As a matter of fact, what Menelik most desires is to be left alone. He is now fifty-eight years of age, and has sown all his political wild oats in his youth. It was a sufficiently arduous task to creep up from a comparatively humble position to that of King of Kings, and his ambitions are now practically exhausted. If there were any menace to his throne or his dominions, he would be alert to defend them. But he has no idea of enlarging them,

unless he were tempted by some diplomatic wind-fall. So long as he lives there is likely to be a profound calm, unless by any chance the French complete their railway from Jibuti and give way to a sudden impulse of aggression. Or if the Mad Mullah or some other Moslem prophet arises in the desert and sweeps Abyssinia, it may become our duty to rectify our Egyptian frontier. But within the range of ordinary probabilities it is safe to say of Abyssinia, as of Turkey, Austria, Bulgaria, and other countries which possess a great statesman for their sovereign, that it is secure until the next demise of the crown. Then there will be no knowing what angler may not deem the moment opportune for trying his luck in the troubled waters of civil war.

We in Egypt must be prepared for events, as we have already spent sufficient blood and treasure in consolidating our empire there. We cannot put up with any turbulence upon our frontier, and should it be threatened, we shall do well to take action too early rather than too late. Whether it would serve our policy to scheme deliberately for an eventual occupation of Abyssinia is another question, which I am not prepared to resolve definitely. It might serve the interests of the Abyssinian land and people, but the labourer is worthy of his hire, and many do not see whence our reward would come for the great effort which would be necessary. A significant remark was made on this subject by a Frenchman at the hotel at Harrar, who said he and his friends would welcome an occupation of the country by



British or Italian and any other European people, so long as the country were opened up to trade and civilisation. I told him that we already had plenty of fruit in and near our own orchards without wanting to come so far afield to pluck an unripe pear.

I do not see why we should not build a railway up from Berbera and open up the trade of the country for the benefit alike of Somaliland and Aden, nor why such a railway should not be connected with the Cape to Cairo line somewhere in the neighbourhood of Fashoda. But the work of disciplining a mountainous country with scarcely a road in it, though all very well if we had nothing else to think about, would be to risk involving ourselves at a period in our Imperial history when we need to be most on the alert. Fools build houses for wise men to live in, and we are not going to add fresh storeys to our empire to provide tenements for any Latin vagabond.

It is a frequent complaint nowadays that the limits of exploration have nearly been reached, and that there is nothing new to be observed under the sun, even in surprising Africa. I believe, however, that if any one chose to devote time and enterprise to going a few days or weeks off the beaten track between the coast and the Abyssinian capital, he might find much to repay him. For instance, I was told that there exists a village of anthropophagi within two hours of Harrar. Of course there would be no advantage in going over there for an afternoon or a picnic, as the natives would scarcely be likely to exhibit their private propensities for the gratification

of a stranger, or press him to take pot-luck. Again I was told that there are two or three towns each as big as Harrar, some a few hours and some six days away, quite unknown to maps and Europeans. One of them is called Bursum. The Abyssinian authorities, of course, know about them, but they do all in their power to prevent travellers from visiting them. Still, I believe that with a certain amount of perseverance it might not be impossible to go there.

Ziquala should also be visited by any one who has a week or so to spare from his stay at Addis Ababa. There are a number of hermitages scattered over a volcanic mountain, in the crater of which is a mysterious black lake. The hermits have many strange ancient customs, and seem to have been settled there from time immemorial. If research could be made in their churches and archives it might bring many interesting surprises to light, but it would be necessary to obtain many powerful recommendations from the court, as the hermits are even more positively convinced than the average Abyssinian that no other people beside their own can possibly be Christian.

The journey through from Addis Ababa to Mas-sowa, which Captain Cotton, whom I met on the road, has been undertaking, also sounds a very tempting one, particularly as no one from Europe has accomplished it since the days of Prester John and the Portuguese missionaries. It would include a visit to the King of Gojam, who may perhaps never have seen a white man; to Tsana Lake, where scarcely any explorer has ever penetrated; to Aksum and other

ruined cities; and to the perpetual snows, glaciers, &c., of the north of Abyssinia, which are entirely unexplored. A traveller would find all sorts of new peoples, new habits, and new conditions of life, which might be of the utmost importance to ethnology. There are the Samien people, about whom nothing is known. Menelik himself remarked the other day that he would be very grateful for information about them. There is also a colony of aboriginal Jews up in the mountains of Tigre. They live in pastoral fashion, like the old Hebrew patriarchs, upon the produce of the flocks and herds. They have been there for centuries, perhaps even for thousands of years, and the Abyssinians confess that they have always failed to dislodge them from their inaccessible fastnesses.

And the promise of sport is very encouraging. The Abyssinian ibex has never been seen alive in Europe, and the people who possess its head are extremely few.<sup>1</sup> There is one in the Natural History Museum, and another in the possession of a Rothschild, but I have not succeeded in tracing any others in England. Indeed, no one appears to know anything about the animal except the vague information that it comes from somewhere in Abyssinia. There are also rumours of an Abyssinian bear, which it would be very interesting to verify, for most people believe that bears do not exist in Africa. The Emperor Menelik said that he had heard of these bears, but had never seen one, nor met anybody who

<sup>1</sup> Captain Cotton, who has just returned to Europe, tells me that he secured this ibex.

had seen one. He was, however, positive as to the existence of some strange animal in the north. It had been described to him as like a hyena, only larger and heavier, with short legs and very thick fur. There is also an Abyssinian buffalo, which forms a distinct species and would afford a very pleasing trophy to an enterprising sportsman. Saving for the roughness of the road and the vagaries of the climate, there would be little to deter a traveller. The natives of course only admit a shadowy allegiance to Menelik, and they are probably very often at war among themselves, but they are not of a dangerous temperament, and would have no reason to molest a stranger who kept aloof from their feuds.

Down in the south of Abyssinia, particularly where Count Leontieff has devastated a province, there would probably be more danger; but even so, I imagine that, with proper precautions and a sufficient retinue, all would go well. There would at any rate be far finer opportunities for incidents than on the beaten track, and the sportsman would be gratified with unspoiled hunting grounds to his full heart's desire.

But for the most adventurous spirits of all I can confidently recommend a trip to the Ogaden country. All the best beasts teem there, and the people are decidedly sportsmen. A traveller is sure to find legitimate opportunities for a baptism of fire; and if he be a bit of a diplomatist as well as a bit of a soldier, he may obtain access to the Mad Mullah, perhaps the most interesting personage in Africa after the great and mysterious Snussi.



When I was at Harrar in February I heard nothing new about him. On my way down to the coast I was overtaken by a rumour that he was within two days' march of that town and intended to attack it immediately. I dismissed this as one of the many fables which serve to while away the tedium of the desert. But on reaching Zaila I found it was perfectly true, and that very serious developments were imminent.

Here is his story in a nutshell. Some years ago Muhammed bin Abdullah was a peaceable citizen of Berbera. He owned several houses and camels, and the Somalis looked up to him as a man of singular piety who had performed the pilgrimage to Mecca several times. He was even in favour with the British authorities, having often exercised his influence to settle small disputes and pacify small contents. Early in 1899, however, his influence had grown dangerous, and it was found necessary to check him for interfering with matters outside his tribe. He grew restive and incited the Somalis to resist the zareba tax, a toll which the head of a tribe had been allowed to collect since the establishment of the protectorate. Being given to understand that this would not be tolerated, he started a rebellion, appealing to the natives chiefly on religious grounds. His fanaticism grew with giant strides, and he gathered round him large mobs of turbulent people; it was even rumoured that he intended to attack Berbera. But he disappeared further and further away into the interior until every one imagined he must be lost. Now, however, it appears that he has been all this

while in the Ogaden country, where Menelik's rule has never been more than nominal. Not long ago the Negus sent an army against his vassals there, but 30,000 savages, armed only with spears, succeeded in annihilating it. The arms and ammunition thus obtained rendered the Ogadenese a very different people to deal with, and until the other day the Abyssinians did not venture on any attempt to retrieve their disaster. Meanwhile the Mullah proceeded to organise these savages and inflated their fanaticism. It is true that the Garasmach of Harrar has now put to flight a vanguard which advanced prematurely, but the Mullah was not present, and he has retired into the wild country like another Osman Digna. He constitutes a menace not merely to Abyssinia, but also to trade and civilisation throughout the north-east of Africa. Any day Abyssinia may find herself face to face with a grave peril similar to that which taxed our energies for so many years in the Soudan.

Harrar is practically the only avenue for caravans approaching the Abyssinian capital from the east, and, once the Mullah established himself in its vicinity, he would be extremely difficult to dislodge, and might work incalculable harm. Nay, he might go further and enlist the Gallas, whom the Abyssinians have only kept in subjection so long by withholding firearms. Together, Gallas and Ogadenese, provided with rifles, could sweep Abyssinia from south to north, and the Mullah would prove no less troublesome a neighbour to Egypt than the Mahdi or the Khalifa.

# APPENDIX I

## ITINERARY

I GIVE the homeward journey, because it is a fair sample of what may be done when the roads are fair and there is no undue delay. My itinerary is quick, but not too hard going. On my way up, the mulemen and the quagmires delayed me so many days that my time-table would be useless. I append the readings of a thermometer, in which I have no great confidence, and some altitudes, which were given me I know not by whom.

I left Addis Ababa on the 31st of January, 1900, and camped—

On	At	After a march of	Altitude		Fahrenheit	
		Hrs. Min.	Ft.	Max.	Min.	
Same night	Rogge	3 25	...	82°	36°	{ Delayed by mule- men ; road fairly good
Feb. 1	Chaffe Dunsä	4 45	7386	78°	45°	
" 2	Godaburka	5 30	5828	87°	55°	
" 3	Minnabella	4 5	...	95°	56°	
" 4	Between Choba and Tadechamalka	5 30	...	95° 101°	68° 72°	All night march
" 6	Kachinwaha	14 5	2947	101°	70°	Very steep
" 7	Lagahardim	6 10	5391	99°	65°	
" 8	Galamso	2 50	5931	85°	56°	
" 9	Borema	7 10	5854	76°	49°	
" 10	Shola Kunni	5 10	7894	82°	55°	
" 11	Between Dabasso and Hirna	5 25	6878	75°	51°	
" 12	Dullo (or Tullo ?)	4 55	...	90°	43°	
" 13	Derru	5 5	7650	99°	49°	
" 14	Challenko	4 45	7062	76°	46°	
" 15	Between Worabili and Garsa	7 0	...	76°	58°	
" 16	Harrar	7 15	6253	89°	59°	By night
" 18	Balawa	8 25	...	...	...	
" 19	Gildessa	4 40	...	85°	47°	Delayed by rivers
" 20	Arto	2 30	...	91°	69°	
" 21	Dabbas	8 35	...	...	...	
" 22	Bia Kaboba	8 50	...	...	...	
" 23	Somadu	8 30	...	...	...	
" 24	Hensa	8 25	...	...	...	
" 26	Zaila	17 10	...	...	...	All night march

The journey up will always be a little slower by reason of the ascent, and, in the case of a first journey, by reason of inexperience.

## APPENDIX II

### OUTFIT

*Camp Outfit.*—Each traveller will take one tent, and, after Somaliland, the servants will be glad of another, which will also serve as a kitchen. I lay in a green Willesden tent, but was not altogether satisfied with it. A white Cabul tent, which may often be picked up second-hand at Aden, is in every way preferable, and it is a safe statement that Indian tent-makers understand their business better than the English. I had occasion to regret not taking a waterproof ground-sheet. My tent was supposed to comprise flooring, but nothing would induce this to meet properly in the middle. My bed was very uncomfortable, and I must caution everybody against a cork mattress. (Mem. : Take plenty of rugs, blankets, clean sheets, and towels. A waterproof carriage-rug is always useful.) Any sort of garden-chair and folding-table will do ; but, like everything else, they should be as light as possible. I had an india-rubber bath, but should try a tin one if I were going again : there is no sense of stability about india-rubber. For cooking, almost any canteen will do, for your Somali cook creates a kitchen-range out of little else than a few stones. An axe will be required for cutting fuel, and some pails for carrying water. Some barrels may be taken for the waterless country, but I believe a few skins or bottles would suffice.

*Provisions* are so much a matter of taste that it is impossible to dogmatise. I am against tinned meats, for live sheep and fowls will be taken and plenty of game may be shot. But all sorts of luxuries are most welcome in the wilds. I advise plenty of soups. A supply of flour and hops will ensure fresh bread all the way. Tinned milk and butter are essential and by no means so nasty as they sound. Tea, sugar, jam, and condiments must be taken. Brandy and whiskey occupy a comparatively small space, but pints of champagne and occasional glasses of liqueur are very welcome. At least three bottles of soda-water per head per day should be taken *from*



*England*, though they are cumbrous and expensive to carry. Many take sparklets, but they do not sparkle sufficiently and they leave you at the mercy of bad water.

*Clothes*.—Khaki for the plains ; plenty of wool and waterproofs for Abyssinia. A pair of spurs for your mule and capacious saddle-bags.

*Arms*.—A .303 and a shot-gun will suffice for those who have no designs upon big game. It is not necessary to arm your retinue, but a couple of five-guinea rifles may be added as a precaution. A revolver is also useful for show.

*Medicines*.—Quinine, opium, aperients, sal volatile, antipyrine, lint, bandages, plaster, carbolic ointment, sulphonal, eye lotion, pure carbolic acid and strychnine pills (in case of snake-bite). You may be expected to prescribe for natives by the way. Give them opium if you have no idea what ails them.

*Packing-cases*.—22 × 14 × 13 inches, each with a padlock and a number.



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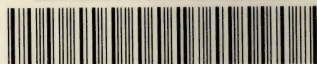








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